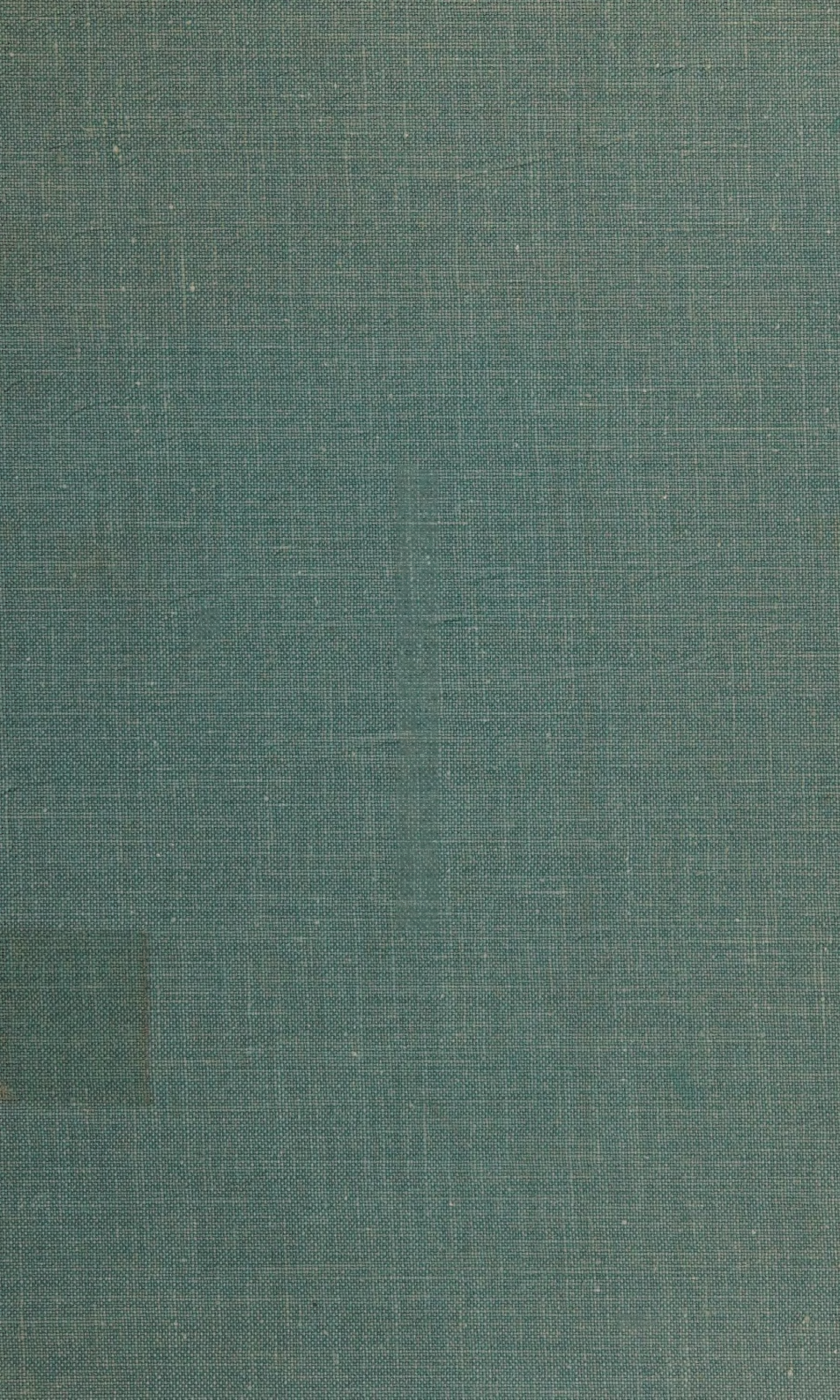










Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/bwb_Y0-BFY-082

DISCARD

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

BY

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

Maua uolta con altra maggiore gra-
uea mi nenne pensato. lui auere il
pie percesso nell'imitare dell'uso
della nostra camera si come la fida-
le serua maua rideotto & ricorda
domi che a nullo altro si quale lau-
domia prese tanta fermeza quanto
acosi facto del non redituro prothesilao: ora molte
uolte ne piansi: quello medesimo dico sperando che
ne auenire: ma non capendomi allora nell'animo che
auenire mi douesse: quasi uani corali pensieri mi ag-
nai di donere lasciare andare mia: i quali pero non si
partieno anua posta: ma tale uolta altri sopraueggen-
done: questi muscuano di mente: pensando all'gra-
ueua: i quali tanta e tali erano: che di quellul numero
non che altro grauerrebbe aricordarsi: ~

Eli non mi uenne una uolta sola nella
mimo lauere ora lecto ne uersi douido
che le fatiche traueuano a giouani amo-
re delle mienta: anzi miragiuua tante
quante uolte io mi ricordaua lui esse
in camina & sentendo quello non
piccolo affanno: e maximamente
a chi e di riposo uso: o il facentio a uolta forte meco
dubitaua in prima: non quello auesse forza di uolom
e appresso non la inuita fatica ne il noioso tempo: e li
fosse cagione d'infirmita: o di pezo: e in questo molto
mi ricorda piu che ne halar di miorare corali par: ben
che souente io e dalle sue medesime lagrime: d'ame
uedute: e dalle mie fatiche: le quali ma non mutarono
l'anua fermeza: argomentu non potere essere ues: o
che per si piccolo affanno si spingesse auere cosi
grande: sperando ancora che la sua giouane eta
la discretion: da altro accidente non lo nel guar-
derebbono: ~

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA.

FROM A PAGE OF A MANUSCRIPT IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.
REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Published by The Naxos Society, London.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

BY
GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO
AUTHOR OF "THE DECAMERON"

*REVISED FROM THE ONLY ENGLISH TRANSLATION
WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

BY
EDWARD HUTTON



GREENWOOD PRESS, PUBLISHERS
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

853.1
B664a
1970

Originally published in 1926
for the Navarre Society, Ltd., London

Reprinted from a copy in the collections
of the Brooklyn Public Library

First Greenwood Reprinting 1970

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 76-98821

SBN 8371-3026-3

PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
MY FRIEND
SIR ISRAEL GOLLANCZ
IN AFFECTIONATE
ADMIRATION

INTRODUCTION

N the year 1328,¹ when Giovanni Boccaccio was fifteen years old, his father, who had hoped to make a banker of him in Florence, finding the boy had no inclinations that way, but was set on letters, hoping still to see him prosperous in the Florentine manner, sent him to Naples to learn to be a merchant.

Naples was then at the height of its splendour, under Robert the Wise. His statecraft, even perhaps his statesmanship, added to the brilliance of his Court, attracted to Naples some of the greatest men of the time. Petrarch praised him, and in a letter, written in 1340 to Cardinal Colonna, says that of all men he would most readily have accepted King Robert as a judge of his ability. In 1330 too Giotto came to Naples on his invitation, while so early as 1310, certainly, Simone Martini was known to him, and seems about that time to have painted his portrait; later representing him in S. Chiara as crowned by S. Louis of Toulouse. So it was into a

¹ This date has been the subject of much controversy. Scholars now seem to be likely to agree that it was in 1328 Boccaccio came to Naples. For an account of the controversy and a discussion of the whole question see my *Giovanni Boccaccio* (1910) and the works there cited. Cf. also Henri Hauvette's *Boccaccio* (Paris, 1914).

INTRODUCTION

city where learning and the arts were the fashion that Boccaccio came in 1328.

There were other things too : the amenity of one's days passed so much in the open air, the splendour of a city rich and secure, the capital of a kingdom and the residence of a king—the only king in Italy ; above all, perhaps, the gaiety of the Southern life in the brilliant sunshine. In those early works of his, the *Filocolo*, the *Filostrato*, the *Teseide*, the *Ameto*, the *Fiammetta*, to which we owe almost everything we know of his life at this time, Boccaccio never tires of telling us about the city of his youth. Naples, he says, was gay, peaceful, rich and splendid above any other Italian city, full of festas, games and shows. One only thought how to occupy oneself, how to amuse oneself, dancing to the sound of music, discussing affairs of love, and losing one's heart over sweet words ; and Venus there was a goddess indeed, so that more than one who came thither a Lucrece returned a Cleopatra. Sometimes, he tells us, the youths and maidens went in the gayest companies into the woods, where tables were prepared for them on which were set out all manner of delicate meats ; and, the picnic over, they would set themselves to dance and to romp and play. Some would glide in boats along the shore ; others, dispensing with shoes and stockings and lifting high their petticoats, would venture among the rocks or into the water to find sea-shells ; others again

INTRODUCTION

would fish with lines. And then there were the Courts of Love, held in the spring, when the girls, adorned with jewels, tried to outshine one another, and while the old people looked on, the young men danced with them, touching their delicate hands.

Whatever Boccaccio's duties may have been, they certainly did not occupy all his time. He enjoyed life, entering with gusto into the gaiety of what was undoubtedly the gayest city in Italy. That he was unfitted for business, which he fiercely disliked, is certain, but he remained six years—"six irrecoverable years," he calls them—with the merchant to whom he had been sent, before he was able to win his father's consent to abandon business for the study of the Arts. Even then his father insisted on a fixed profession, and therefore set him to study Canon Law.

Such was his life. He fell in love of course, and speaks often of the beauty of the women amid that splendour of earth and sea and sky; he tells us of two he courted and loved, a blonde and a brunette, Pampinea and Abrotonia he calls them. These were not profound passions of course, but the sentimental or sensual ardours of youth, that were an introduction to Love himself. For it was in the midst of this gay life, full of poetry and study, that he met her who was so profoundly to influence his life and shape his work.

INTRODUCTION

He saw her first on a Holy Saturday, as he himself tells us, and as we think on 30th March 1336.¹ He had gone to Mass, it seems, about ten o'clock in the morning, the fashionable hour of the day, rather to see the people than to attend the service, in the church of S. Lorenzo of the Franciscans. "I found myself," he says, in the *Filocolo*, "in a fine church of Naples named after him who endured to be offered as a sacrifice upon the gridiron, and there was a singing compact of sweetest melody. I was listening to the Holy Mass celebrated by a priest, successor to him who first girt himself humbly with the cord, exalting poverty and adopting it. Now while I stood there, the fourth hour of the day, according to my reckoning, having already passed down the eastern sky, there appeared to my eyes the wondrous beauty of a young woman, come thither to hear what I too heard attentively. I had no sooner seen her than my heart began to throb so strongly that I felt it in my slightest pulses; and not knowing why, nor perceiving what had happened, I began to say, 'Ohimè, what is this?' . . . But at length, being unable to sate myself with gazing, I said, 'O Love, most noble Lord, whose strength not even the gods were able to resist, I thank thee for setting such happiness before my eyes.' . . . I had no sooner said these

¹ This date too has been the subject of endless controversy. See my *Giovanni Boccaccio*, and the works there quoted, and cf. H. Hauvette, *op. cit.*

INTRODUCTION

words than the flashing eyes of the lovely lady fixed themselves on mine.”¹

Fiammetta, for it was she, was tall and *slanciata*; her hair, he tells us, “is so blonde that the world holds nothing like it; it shades a white forehead of noble width, beneath which are the curves of two black and most slender eyebrows . . . and under these two roguish eyes . . . cheeks of no other colour than milk.” On that day she was dressed in a *bruna vesta*, and wearing a veil that fell from her head crowned with a garland. When she saw that he continued to stare at her, she screened herself with her veil. But he changed his position and found a place by a column whence he could see her very well, and there, while the priest sang the Mass, he drank in her blonde beauty, which the dark clothes made more splendid—the golden hair and the milk-white skin, the shining eyes and the mouth like a rose in a field of lilies. Once she looked at him—“*con acuto riguardamento*.” So he stayed where he was till the service was over, “*senza mutare luogo*.” Then he joined his companions, waiting with them at the door to see the girls pass out, and it was there in the midst of other ladies that he saw her for the second time, watching her pass out of S. Lorenzo on her way home.

¹ See *Filocolo* (Moutier, Florence, 1829), i, p. 5 *et seq.* The scene is described also in the *Filostrato*, I, xxvi-xxxiv. In the *Fiammetta*, cap. 1, it is described from Fiammetta's point of view.

INTRODUCTION

The morrow was Easter Day, and again he went to S. Lorenzo, to see her only, and she was there indeed, "*di molto oro lucente*"—adorned with gems and dressed in most fair green, beautiful both by nature and by art. Then he said: "This is she who was ordained to rule my mind and who was promised me for lady in my dreams." From this moment began for him "the new life."

Who was this lady promised him in his dreams, whose love was to be the great prize of his youth? We know really very little about her, though he speaks of her so often, but in three well-known places—in the *Filocolo*, the *Ameto* and the *Amorosa Visione*—he tells us of her origin.

It is in the *Ameto* that he gives us the fullest account of her. There he tells us ¹ that at the Court of King Robert there was a gentleman of the wealthy and powerful house of Aquino who held in Naples "the highest place beside the throne of him who reigned there." This noble had married, we learn, a young Provencal, highly praised by many for her beauty, who with her husband lived in the royal palace.² Of this pair were born "some daughters whom Fiammetta called sisters" and a son, who was assassinated. Fiammetta's birth, like Boccaccio's own, is, we understand, surrounded by some mystery, "*volutuoso e lascivo*." To make a long story short, it is

¹ *Ameto*, in *Opere Minori* (Milan, 1879), pp. 221-223.

² *Filocolo*, ed. cit., i, p. 4.

INTRODUCTION

suggested that the king had seduced the young wife of Aquino, and that Fiammetta was his daughter. She was born, he tells us, in the spring, the spring of 1314 it seems, and was named Maria.¹ Before long she lost her mother, just as he had done himself; but before she died she had told her, as well as she could considering her tender age, the secret of her birth. Not long after Aquino died also, leaving the child in the care of the nuns, it seems of S. Arcangelo a Baiano. There she grew up, and like many others of her sensuous temperament desired presently to be a nun; indeed she had a vision in which S. Scholastica appeared to her and invited her to take the vows. But happily this was not to be.

In those days people "in the world;" men as well as women, were received even by the "enclosed" in the parlour of the convent, where it was customary to hold receptions. So we learn there presently began a struggle in Fiammetta's heart—it was not of very long duration—between her resolution to take the veil and her feminine vanity. Little by little she began to adorn herself, she received offers of marriage which by no means shocked her, she became reconciled to the life of the world for which she was so perfectly fitted by nature. Among the suitors was a young noble of good fortune. To him

¹ Maria d'Aquino. That her name was Maria is certain. See the dedication of the *Amorosa Visione*, where an acrostic reveals it. Cf. *Filocolo*, ed. cit., vol. i, p. 4, and *Fiammetta* (Operi Minori, Milan, 1879), p. 21.

INTRODUCTION

as to the rest she replied with a refusal. The young man however—we do not know his name—was not easily discouraged. He renewed his suit and was accepted.

So she was married. Her beauty was famous and she soon gave herself up to all the voluptuousness of her nature. That she could read we know, for she read not only Boccaccio's letters, but Ovid, probably a translation of the *Ars Amandi*, and the French romances. She was greatly run after by the youth of the Neapolitan Court, who swore no festa was complete without her. Her husband's house too was in such a position that not only the citizens, but strangers, who must on arrival or departure pass it by, might spy her at her window or on her balcony. Then she also found that stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.¹ She excuses herself for having betrayed the husband who loved her and can say: "What is lawfully pursued is apt to be considered of small account even though it be most excellent, but what is difficult of attainment, even if contemptible, is held in high esteem." Like many vain and sensual natures she was cruel, and encouraged her suitors to squander their substance on her, giving them nothing in return and leading each to suppose that he was the only one she loved, and that she was about to make him happy. "And I," she says, "I have laughed at them all, choosing

¹ *Filostrato*, parte ii, strofe 74.

INTRODUCTION

however those who took my fancy and who were judged apt to give me pleasure. But no sooner was the fire spent than I broke the vase which contained the water and flung away the pieces." Such then was the blonde Fiammetta whom Boccaccio loved.

But how could he, a mere merchant's son, ever hope to reach the arms of this disdainful, indifferent lady? By means of poetry? It seems so. He tells us in fact, in the introduction to his first romance, the *Filocolo*, that after his first encounters with Fiammetta in S. Lorenzo he was so deeply in love that he knew not what to do, having no access to Fiammetta, when chance, possibly assisted by himself, gave him the opportunity of going with other young people to S. Arcangelo a Baiano, where he met Fiammetta again and was presented to her. The conversation among that joyous crowd turned on a French romance, the story of Floire and Blanchfleur, when, turning to Boccaccio, Fiammetta said, "It is great pity that the memory of the two gentle lovers should be hidden among gross stories which can only please the vulgar: they should be the theme of a great poet," and thereupon challenged him to write their story for her. This he lost no time in doing, and to such good effect that ere long he was her accepted *cavaliere servente*.

Their love story, if indeed we interpret Boccaccio's romances aright, divides itself thus into a very brief period "of uncertainty," a longer period in which

INTRODUCTION

he is accepted as courtier upon trial, and a third period, in which, moved by his stories and repeated proofs of his devotion—and of that there can never have been any doubt—she returns his love. This is the period of *dolce signoria*, at the end of which an act of audacity on Boccaccio's part forces her, nothing loath, to give herself to him.

Fiammetta like a very woman denied herself to him over and over again, though very willingly she would have given him all. Expert as he became, in this woman's heart at least, he guessed all this, and knew besides that she could not give him what he desired unless he took it with a show at least of violence. He awaited the opportunity. It seems to have come during the absence of her husband in Capua.¹ Screwing his courage to the sticking point he resolved to go to her chamber, and to this end persuaded or bribed her maid to help him.²

Led by the maid into Fiammetta's chamber he hid himself behind the curtains of the great marital bed. Presently she came in with the maid, who undressed her and put her to bed and left her, half laughing, half in tears. Again he waited, and when at last, desperate with anxiety and hope, he dared to come out of his hiding she was sleeping as quietly as a child. For a time he looked at her, then, trembling

¹ See *Ameto*, ed. cit., p. 224 *et seq.*

² For all these particulars and the following see *Filocolo*, ed. cit., ii, pp. 168-169, 174, 178-179.

INTRODUCTION

and scarce daring to breathe the while, he crept into the great bed beside her, in verity as though he were her newly wedded husband. Then softly he kissed her, sleeping still, and drawing aside the curtain that hid the light ¹ discovered to his amorous eyes “*il delicato petto, e con desiderosa mano toccava le ritonde mammelle, baciandola molte volte,*” and already held her in his arms when she awakened. She opened her mouth to cry for help, he closed it with kisses; she strove to get out of bed, but he held her firm, bidding her have no fear. She was defeated of course, but that her yielding might not seem too easy she reproached him ² in a trembling voice—trembling with fear and pleasure—for the violence with which he had stolen what she had always denied him; adding that all was quite useless, as she did not wish it.

Then Boccaccio, putting all to the proof, drew a dagger from his belt and, retiring to a corner of the bed, in a low and distressed voice said—we find the words in the *Ameto*—“I come not, O lady, to defile the chastity of thy bed, but as an ardent lover to obtain relief for my burning desires; thou alone canst assuage them, or tell me to die: surely I will only leave thee satisfied or dead; not that I seek to gratify my passion by violence or to compel any to raise cruel hands against me; but if thou art deaf

¹ Fiammetta was afraid of the dark since childhood; she always had a light in her room. Cf. *Fiammetta*, ed. cit., p. 55.

² *Fiammetta*, ed. cit., p. 67.

INTRODUCTION

to my entreaties with my dagger I shall pierce my heart."

To kill himself . . . there ! Oh, no, Giovanni ! Certainly she did not want that. What then ? Well, not a dead man in her room at any rate, for all the world to talk about. " Oh, no, Giovanni. . . ."

That night was but the first of a long series as we must suppose. " Oh," says Fiammetta, in the romance which bears her name, " how he loved my room, and with what joy it saw him arrive. He held it in greater reverence than any church (temple). Ah me, what pleasant kisses ! what loving embraces ! How many nights passed as though they had been bright days in sweet converse without sleep ! How many delights, dear to every lover, have we enjoyed there in those happy days." ¹

Well, do we not know how they spent their days ? It was ever Boccaccio's way to kiss and tell. Has he not spoken of the festas and the jousts and the rare encounters that in Naples greeted Primavera ? ² We see him with Fiammetta at the Courts of Love, in the deep shade of the gardens, in the joyful fields, ³ on the seashore at Baia ⁴ and at the Bagno beside the lake of Avernus, while we may catch a glimpse of them too at a wedding feast. ⁵ So passed what proved

¹ *Fiammetta*, ed. cit., p. 39.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 84-88.

³ *Filocolo*, ed. cit., ii, p. 27 *et seq.*

⁴ Sonnet xxxii, *Rime* (Moutier).

⁵ *Fiammetta*, ed. cit., pp. 77-80.

INTRODUCTION

to be the one happy year of their love, and perhaps the happiest of Giovanni's life.

With the dawn of 1338 his troubles began: at first jealousy. He came home from a winter journey to find Fiammetta disdainful, angry, even indifferent.¹ Whose fault was it? Perhaps there is not much need to ask. Fiammetta was incapable of any stability in love and Giovanni could not help looking at *altre donne*.² As we have seen, Fiammetta was surrounded by admirers, who were not certainly more scrupulous than Boccaccio. His suspicions were aroused, and he must have found it difficult to obey her when she forbade him to follow her to Baia in 1338.

His fears were well founded—he was betrayed. He did not know it when she first returned to Naples after the summer was gone. She took care of that,³ but she gave him excuses instead of kisses, which only roused his angry jealousy more. It must be remembered that though Giovanni would gad after other beauties he loved Fiammetta then and always. It is not surprising then that his jealousy became a wild anger.⁴ Little by little suspicion grew to certainty; he guessed he was betrayed, he knew it, he suspected the very man, his supplanter, his friend; and he sees him as it were in a dream like a great

¹ Sonnet lix, *Rime*, ed. cit.

² Madrigal 11, Sonnet xxiv, *Rime*, ed. cit.

³ *Filocolo*, ed. cit., ii, 70-71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ed. cit., ii, 71: "My heart was filled with such furious anger that I almost broke away from her, yet I restrained myself."

INTRODUCTION

mastiff on the mountains, who devours the hen-pheasant at a mouthful.¹ What could he do, what could he say? "Let thy name perish, Baia . . ."

After rage, humiliation. He tells himself that in spite of everything he will love her always, more and more, yea more than his own life or honour. He will persist, he will not be easily beaten, he will regain her. And yet it is all quite useless, as he knows.²

But fate was not content, as he himself says, with this single blow. Till now he had wanted for nothing; he had had a house of his own and had been able to go to Court when and as he would, and to enter freely into the life of the gay city. Now suddenly poverty stared him in the face. His father, from whom all that was stable and good in his life hitherto had proceeded, was ruined, he learned. But even in his fall he remembered his son, and though Giovanni was now twenty-five years of age he maintained him, at considerable inconvenience doubtless, till 1st November 1339, by buying for him the produce of a *podere* near Capua.

Upon this misfortune all his companions forsook him; one by one they fell away. He no longer lived in the city, but without; was deprived alike of its pleasures and the excitements and distractions of his love.

Deserted by his companions, he reminded himself

¹ *Filocolo*, ed. cit., ii, 25-26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 262.

INTRODUCTION

that he was a poet, and that solitude was his friend. Henceforth his life should belong to literature.

In the midst of this resurrection of energy, in which, as we learn, he had grown calm enough to see Fiammetta afar off without flinching, and even with a sort of pleasure, his father, now a widower "full of years, deprived by death of his children," summoned him home.¹ He left Naples in the last days of 1340, and by so doing just missed seeing Petrarch, who reached Naples as a guest of King Robert in March 1341.

So Giovanni came back into the delicate and strong Florentine country, along the bad roads, through the short days, the whole world lost in wind and rain, homesick for that ghost in his heart.

His life on his return from Naples was far from happy, if we may believe the bitter and cruel verses in which he speaks of his old father²; and he writes to Niccolò Acciaiuoli in Naples: "I can write nothing here where I am, in Florence, for if I should I must write not in ink but in tears. My only hope is in you, and you alone can change my unhappy fate."

He was very poor also, but his father was able to leave him free to work as he wished—the old man was satisfied with his mere presence and company.

This period in his life, materially so unfortunate, was however to prove the most fruitful. It was in

¹ Cf. *Ameto*, ed. cit., pp. 187-188.

² *Ibid.*, p. 254.

INTRODUCTION

the five years which followed his return from Naples that he wrote the *Filocolo*, the *Ameto*, the *Teseide*, the *Amorosa Visione*, the *Filostrato* and the *Fiammetta*—and somewhat in that sequence.

A single thought seems to fill his mind: he had loved a princess and been loved in return; she had forsaken him, but she remained in spite of everything the lodestar of his life. He writes really of nothing else but this. Full of her, he sets himself to glorify her and to tell over and over again his own story.

In the *Filocolo* it is the story of Floire and Blanchefleur he tells, as we have seen at Fiammetta's behest, and in order to please her, but he is not really concerned with it in its integrity, and in the construction he certainly does not show himself to be the future composer of the *Decameron*. He collects in haste all sorts of episodes and adventures, and tells them, not without some confusion, solely to serve his own ends to express himself and his love. He cares for nothing but flattering Fiammetta and telling her he loves her.

The *Filocolo* was written in prose. In his next venture he attempted a story in verse. It is written in *ottave*, and was begun during the earlier and brighter period of his life. "You are gone suddenly to Samnium," he writes, in the dedication to Fiammetta, "and . . . I have sought in the old histories what personage I might choose as messenger of my secret and unhappy love, and I have found Troilus son of

INTRODUCTION

Priam, who loved Criseyde. His miseries are my history. I have sung them in light rhymes and in my own Tuscan, and so when you read the lamentations of Troilus and his sorrow at the departure of his love, you shall know my fears, my sighs, my agonies, and if I vaunt the beauties and the charms of Criseyde you will know that I dream of yours." That is just his intention. He is tremendously interested in what he has suffered; he wishes her to know of it; he is eager to tell of his experiences, his pains and joys. The story is the merest excuse, a means of self-expression. The character of Criseyde, vain, false and light, but absolutely living and a very woman, is doubtless subtly modelled, without too much exaggeration, on that of Fiammetta. In direct contrast is the character of Troilus, eager, ardent, youth itself. He knows no country, no religion, no filial affection, but lives for and sees only Criseyde. Every day he will thrust himself into the thickest of the fight in search of glory, that he may lay it at her feet and win her praise. It is love that has made him a hero, as it made Boccaccio a poet. In the last book of the poem, which is not indeed a part of it, but rather a sort of epilogue, he dedicates his work to Fiammetta,

"Alla divina gentil donna della mia mente,"

and tells her that she may find there his own tears and sighs.

In his next work, or what I take to be his next, the

INTRODUCTION

Teseide, we see the agonies of his jealousy. It is prefaced by a letter "To Fiammetta," in which he tells us why he has written the poem, while "thinking of past joy in present misery." The work professes to be a story of ancient times, and to be concerned with the love two brothers-in-arms, Palemon and Arcite, bear Emilia. It was begun in the shadow of Virgil's tomb, and is in fact exactly as long as the *Æneid*. The story is the merest excuse. "It is to please you," he tells Fiammetta, "that I have composed this love story." Was it with some idea of winning back her love by this stupendous manuscript? How charming and how naïve; how like Giovanni too; but how absurd to dream of thus influencing Fiammetta! Did she ever read these nine thousand odd verses? *Che, Che!*

In the *Ameto*, a pastoral romance in prose scattered with verses, we find Boccaccio back in the Florentine country. Let the story, wearisome and complicated, be what it may. It is not in it that we shall find much interest, but in the biographical allusions in which the work is very rich. Fiammetta is Hope, and she gives hope to Caleone, who is Despair. Caleone is of course Boccaccio himself. He tells us that this work was written in order that he might tell freely without regret or fear what he had seen and heard. It is all his life we find embedded there. Fiammetta there tells how her mother was seduced by King Robert; then she describes Caleone's passion for her,

INTRODUCTION

his nocturnal surprise of her and his triumph. The work in fact is a more or less complete biography.

There follows the *Amorosa Visione*, which, whether or no it was begun in Naples, recalls the happier time of his love; and Fiammetta—to whom the work is dedicated in an acrostic which is solved by reading the initial letters of the first verse of each *terzina*, the result being two sonnets and a *ballata*—is the soul of the poem. The name “Madonna Maria” is formed by the initials of the twelfth to the twenty-second *terzina* of cap. x, and the name “Fiamma” by those of the twenty-fifth to the thirty-first of cap. xiii. Here is no allegory at all, but a clear statement, the last three lines of the first sonnet reading :

“*Cara Fiamma per cui 'l cuore ò caldo
Que' che vi manda questa Visione
Giovanni è di Boccaccio da Certaldo.*”

And now we come to the *Fiammetta*, the last of his works directly concerned with his passion for Maria d'Aquino. It was completed in 1343, after his old father's marriage to Bice di Ubaldino de' Bostichi, which took place in the middle of 1341, and not less than two years after Giovanni's return from Naples.¹ Though concerned with the same subject—his love—there is a very extraordinary difference, in that respect, between this work and those which had preceded it. In all the other books concerned with

¹ Crescini, *Contributo*, p. 155.

INTRODUCTION

Fiammetta he assures us that it was he who was betrayed by her, that it is he who longs to return to her, that it is she who is disdainful, perjured and will none of him. Here he asserts that Pànfilo (himself) betrayed Fiammetta! Moreover he warns us that here he speaks the truth¹; but in fact it is only here he is a liar.

What can have been his reasons for thus turning the tables on her? Was it revenge? It is impossible to believe that everyone had not penetrated his various disguises, and he must have known that this was, and would be, so. Did he wish, then, both to revenge himself and to vindicate himself—for his betrayal still hurt him keenly—and knowing that Fiammetta would read the book, which bore her name as title, *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, wrote here, and with infinite detail and circumstance, that it was he who left her, not she him? That is of course the general view, and it may be the right one. In any case, the book is very amusing for us who are behind the scenes, as it was doubtless for many of those who read it in his day.

The action is very simple, the story being told by Fiammetta herself as though it were an autobiography. Fiammetta passes quickly over her birth and upbringing: she is noble, rich and beautiful, and sought after by gallants. She contracts a marriage which promises every happiness and she appears to

¹ *Fiammetta*, cap. i.

INTRODUCTION

all her friends to be the spoilt child of Fortune. But she is warned in a dream that great unhappiness is in store for her. One day in church she meets the eager gaze of a young man who is looking at her greedily and steadfastly. She is fascinated by his regard, which does not leave her for a moment ; she finds she cannot take her eyes off his. She no longer belongs to herself and, the service over, she leaves the church dazed and bewildered. Exalted by this emotion she adorns herself with all her finery and longs to meet him again, which indeed soon befalls, and each time she feels herself more strongly attracted, so that she is seized with a strange weeping when she retires to her chamber alone. Her old nurse recognizes the malady from which she is suffering and remonstrates with her. All to no purpose. The unknown youth succeeds in introducing himself into the society she frequents and even wins the confidence of her husband. He even dares to make allusions to his love under fictitious names : he speaks of Pànfilo and Fiammetta as the Greek hero and heroine of a story he recounts. She understands. Pànfilo, what was he but, in his own supposed language, all-love, whose real name was Giovanni ; and Fiammetta ? . . . But she understood, as we do.

Profiting by a lucky circumstance, the absence of her husband, Pànfilo one night hides himself in her room and she finds she has only "the firm intention of letting him vanquish her."

INTRODUCTION

A period of intense happiness now opens for her, which she describes with enthusiasm and in detail, in order, as she says, to emphasize by contrast the distress and misery which awaited her. These scenes, though voluptuous, are really passionate, and in their eager and burning sincerity, in view of what is to come, have a genuinely tragic atmosphere.

Nor has she long to wait for the *dénouement*. Ordered by his father to return to Florence, Pànfilo after much hesitation breaks the news of his departure to her. At first she refuses to believe it, to permit it; heaps reproaches upon him, will hear nothing of it; till finally she has to accept the inevitable, obtaining at the same time a promise from Pànfilo that he will return within four months. There follows the moving scene of farewell, which one feels would never have ended if Fiammetta had not fainted.

Thus ends the action of the story : the rest of the work is devoted to a record of Fiammetta's vain expectation of Pànfilo's return and her questionings, fears and imaginings; the rumours which terrify and break her heart; while she lives only to see her lover once more.

But Pànfilo does not return : he will come back no more, he will not even send the smallest message. Fiammetta's despair is the whole matter of the rest of the work, and it is here we see the most striking achievement of the romance, its extraordinary

INTRODUCTION

psychological insight, in which Fiammetta's heart and its desperation, her whole character, are wonderfully unfolded and exposed ; the slightest incidents seem to take on a marvellous importance, in which despair gives place to hope, hope to despair, and we watch this tortured woman on the rack of jealousy and rage and love.

I must refer the reader to the work itself for the immense riches it contains of observation and intuition in regard to Fiammetta's heart and character. No analysis can do it justice. Boccaccio shows us the whole passionate and unfortunate woman—it might seem with a careful cruelty which may be, and perhaps is, the wrong side of love, but with an intensity which is certainly a wonderful achievement, and one not generally expected of a writer in the fourteenth century. We are more used to it to-day, but our most adept artist in this manner might well learn something from Boccaccio. Moreover there are passages of an exquisite delicacy, which are unmatched in the prose literature of that age and not surpassed perhaps in any succeeding time. Where else will you find a scene to match the subtle delicacy of that in which Panfilo, knowing he must confess to Fiammetta that he is about to leave her, sleeps uneasily beside her, tormented even in his slumber by the ghost in his heart ? And she, who has overheard him in his sleep, lies so still lest she should wake him, because she would, if she could, prevent,

INTRODUCTION

or at least postpone, the instinctive shame he will feel, not only at what he must say, but at having in any way betrayed himself in his sleep. That passage has called for the admiration of every critic of this work, and is perhaps the best example of one side of its worth.

But in this extraordinary book, so full of the two lovers as to leave little room for any beside, all who have read it have been struck by two figures of the second order, which, in the exquisite precision of their presentment, are a great achievement in themselves, and certainly not to be matched in any other work of this time: I mean Fiammetta's husband and her nurse. Fiammetta's husband—charming, chivalrous, affectionate and so considerate of his wife as he sees her suffering from a melancholy which he cannot but perceive yet knows not whence it comes. You see him anxiously bringing her remedies, taking her away for distraction to the chase, to the various life and pleasures of Baia. He seems to stand alone in literature, a noble and gentle figure, by no means the husband of comedy but a figure really drawn from life, without an afterthought, without caricature. She cares for him, and is ashamed and full of remorse, even while she is in the grip of this fatal passion for Pànfilo—ashamed of having deceived him, having caused him anxiety and grief.

The second figure is the nurse. She is far from be-

INTRODUCTION

ing the marvellous comic figure which Shakespeare drew as the nurse of Juliet. Perhaps she has not the quick vitality of that ever-living figure. She is altogether human, without caricature; not exploited for the purpose of the author or the amusement of the reader. At first she is severe and disapproving of this wild love, but later full of a truly maternal tenderness and pity for her dear lady, in which if she is complaisant it is because she realizes, as such people are quick to do, the fatality of this miserable passion, which now threatens her mistress's life, and is rather a malady than a love affair.

And so in spite of its enormous prolixity this "Elegy" is a masterpiece, which for all its earlier fame has had far less than justice in our day. It should stand in our affection: it is only forgotten. This was perhaps understandable in an age when action, and action alone, appealed to the reader of romance. But that day is over, and we have in the *Fiammetta* not only a great psychological romance, but a picture of manners, of fourteenth-century life in Naples, which certainly stands quite alone. Such a picture of contemporary life is not to be found even in Chaucer, and in the whole of the *Decameron* it is not really to be matched. It is a novel of contemporary life, quite as "realistic" as it is "romantic," and as living in those scenes of Neapolitan life which disengage themselves from its pages as any novel that was ever written.

INTRODUCTION

Its enormous and, as I for one think, delightful prolixity serves to hide its definite reality and truth—and this prolixity loses nothing in the hands of our euphuistic translator—but there is something else too which serves to hide the life in it. I mean the imitation of the classics which runs all through it, an understandable affectation, but one very disagreeable to us. Boccaccio says that we shall not in reading it find any Grecian fables nor Trojan wars. This may be true, but he speaks of Pànfilo and Fiammetta as of a Greek or Roman hero and heroine whose love affair he recounts. Whole passages are taken from Ovid's *Heroides* and *Ars Amandi*—even the first scene with the nurse is taken almost word for word from the *Hippolytus* of Seneca, and there are literally hundreds of imitations only less obvious. And though he has borrowed in such passages always well, and sometimes with advantage, what are we to make of the apparition of Venus and her discourse with Fiammetta in the earlier part of the work, and the continual intervention of mythological personages, which not only spoils his work for us, but, one thinks, must always have cursed it with an air of affectation which would have utterly destroyed anything less passionate, less fundamentally personal, less essentially spontaneous than this?

These allusions were perhaps natural to Boccaccio, who was to be a good soldier in the Revival of Learn-

INTRODUCTION

ing. They were once perhaps novel, and charmed the exquisites of an age only just recovering the classics and awakening from barbarism. The innumerable editions of the *Fiammetta* in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would certainly attest it. These allusions pleased the readers of those times. For us I fear they can only be banal and insupportable, when they do not seem ridiculous. Our taste in the twentieth century is no doubt much more sure and catholic than that of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

As to the style of the *Fiammetta*, like all Italian prose, except perhaps the *Fioretti* and their Letters—yes, even Machiavelli—it is a little heavy and redundant. Still, all fourteenth-century Tuscan is beautiful—it is the *buon secolo*—and full of charm. Boccaccio, however, though he may have thought to write here a parallel to the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, has not succeeded in imitating his model in his prose style.

We may note too that his work has no perspective—no more than the altar-pieces of his time: but it has no line either, and as decoration it is overcrowded with detail. He loves to say everything, and his periods are too full and too slow in movement. The *Fiammetta* has exquisite and lovely moments, but it tends to weary one at last. Nevertheless the book has—and its style perhaps enhances—a quality of tragic grandeur which makes it unique

INTRODUCTION

among psychological romances, of which it was the first example.

What then was Boccaccio's object in writing this romance? It has been said over and over again that his object was to revenge himself upon Maria d'Aquino for betraying him, and that in representing her as the victim and himself as the runaway lover he achieved a very obvious vengeance. It may be so. But it seems too much like a motive of our time—too childish and too silly for the fourteenth century. Have those who would seriously maintain such a thesis ever really read this extraordinary book? No one who has read it can have felt that that vengeance was very successful, or even at all. For the effect of the book is quite opposite. Fiammetta is not belittled, nor made ridiculous, nor exposed. She is exalted: she is exalted over all other women who have ever tragically loved—even Io and Byblis and Myrrha and Canace and Thisbe and Dido and Hero and Iseult. Was this then Boccaccio's vengeance—to exalt the woman whom he would humble, to exalt her over all other women, and to win for her our pity and forgiveness, our love, even our esteem?

No. When Boccaccio wishes to revenge himself he knows how to do it. Let the *Corbaccio* bear witness for him. He may however in writing the *Fiammetta* have wished to establish—as in part was the case—that it was he who left Fiammetta and not she him.

INTRODUCTION

It was in fact he who left Naples ; but she had, it seems, given him his *cong * before then.

The translation here presented to the reader of this amazing work is the only one that has ever been made in English. It was published in the year 1587, in quarto, at London, and printed in black letter by I. C. for Thomas Gubbin and Thomas Newman, and dedicated to Sir William Hatton.

It is a very rare book. Only four copies are known to exist of it : (1) British Museum ; (2) Bodleian ; (3) H. E. Huntingdon (San Gabriel, California) ; (4) W. A. White (New York). Mr Esdaile informs me that the British Museum copy was bought in 1910 for about £40 from Quaritch.¹ The printer, I. C., was John Charlwood. I find however that the British Museum copy, from which this reprint is taken, is imperfect. A line from the top of the second page of the Author's Prologue has been cut away entirely by the binder. The catchword is "every," and the British Museum copy continues : "hold, which for the most part all women have . . ." The missing line reads : "every one by her selfe, or else altogether, with that pittiful heart be- . . ." I have supplied this line from the Bodleian copy (Douce, BB, 387), which is a magnificent example with large margins.

The delectable translator was Bartholomew

¹ See *Short Title Catalogue of English Books to 1640* (Bibliographical Society, 1926).

INTRODUCTION

Yong—"B. Giovano" he calls himself, as though to connect himself by an anagram with Giovanni Boccaccio.

Very little was known of Bartholomew Yong¹ till the admirable industry of Mr T. P. Harrison supplied us with a number of facts and dates.² It was known that Yong was of the Middle Temple and had been in Spain, that he contributed to *England's Helicon* some poor verses—so poor that Bullen explained their presence by suggesting he must have been a friend of the editor, and that he was a friend of Edward Banister. It was also common knowledge that he translated from the Spanish Montemayor's *Diana* (published 1598) and from the Italian the fourth book of Guazzo's *Civile Conversation* (1586), as well as Boccaccio's *Fiammetta*. Mr Harrison, however, has discovered the year of his birth, his religion and many other things about him.

Bartholomew Yong was the eldest son and the third child of Gregory Yong "of the county of York," of the Company of Grocers of London, living in the parish of St Peter's, Cornhill, where Bartholomew was born, and where he was christened on the 24th of August 1560. Gregory Yong was an eager Catholic, as his son was to be. He was the younger

¹ See *D.N.B.*, sub. nom.

² See "Bartholomew Yong, Translator," by T. P. Harrison (Austin, Texas, U.S.A.) in *Modern Language Review*, vol. xxi, No. 2 (April 1926), pp. 129-139.

INTRODUCTION

brother of a distinguished Catholic recusant, Dr John Yong, who in Queen Mary's time had been Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, Regius Professor of Divinity and Vice-Chancellor of the University. After Mary's death he was imprisoned as a recusant, and in 1574, when Bartholomew was fourteen, was in the Marshalsea, and in June of that year was given a certain liberty upon the bonds of Roger Hool and Gregorie Yong, grocers, citizens of London. It is clear then that Bartholomew was a member of a family which, though it conformed outwardly and in fear to the Church of England as by law established, was attached to the old religion and held the faith of the Catholic Church, in whose cause and for whose Faith the head of that family was suffering imprisonment. Later Dr Yong was committed to the care of the Dean of Canterbury, whose business it was "by gentle perswasions" to oblige him to be conformed to the State Church; but by February 1577/1578 this was found to be useless and he was sent back to prison.

It is not surprising, then, that Bartholomew grew up an ardent Catholic, and indeed we find him at the age of twenty travelling to Spain on the business of his recusant uncle, where he met the Duchess of Feria (Jane Dormer), who was urging Philip of Spain to assert his claim to the English throne by force of arms. He spent two years in

INTRODUCTION

Spain, but seems to have been so much occupied with affairs that he did not read, or even hear of, Montemayor's *Diana*, so popular at that time, which after his return to England he was to translate, at the request of his friend, another Catholic, Edward Banister, of Idworth.

Yong returned to England in May 1580, without, as he had intended, going on to Italy. He then, as he tells us, spent "well nigh three years in some serious studies"—in other words, these years were spent at the New Inn and the Middle Temple, to which he was admitted on the 19th May 1582. It was in this or the following year that he undertook the translation of Montemayor's *Diana*, which, however, was not published till 1598. He then turned from Spanish to Italian, translating the fourth book of Guazzo's *Civile Conversation* and Boccaccio's *Amorous Fiammetta* in rapid succession; the first was published in 1586, the second in 1587. The date there given, "*Il decimo l'Anno terzo d'Aprile 1587*," should in all probability read, "*Il decimo terzo d'Aprile l'Anno 1587*"—that is, the 14th of April 1587.

Mr Harrison tells us further that Gregory Yong wrote his will in 1604, and states therein that he had already given his children what he thought sufficient, "and especially my son Bartholomew as by assurance to him made of lands and otherwise and by a writing under my hand and seal testifying

INTRODUCTION

the payment of divers sums to him . . . a more greater portion than I have given . . . amongst all the rest of my said children." The truth is, Gregory had been twice married, and all the beneficiaries under this will are the children of his second marriage.

We know little more of Bartholomew Yong. It is certain however that his friendship with Edward Banister endured. In March 1600 Bartholomew wrote the first leaf of his will, while the testator was sick, and receives under it "four angels for a ring, and, with two others, certain property—to be bestowed for the benefit of his soul."

In 1610 Gregory Yong died, and was buried, on 11th June, in St Peter's, Cornhill. In the same year we find Bartholomew buying property for twenty pounds at Tolleshunt Darcy, in Essex. This is the last we hear of him, though it may be hoped that further research, as suggested by Mr Harrison, may bring new facts to light.

Mr Harrison supposes literature to have been a mere pastime with Yong, and this may well have been so. At the same time he is, on the whole, a careful and faithful translator, with a genuine sense of the beauty of the English language. His translation of the *Fiammetta* is a work of art; the euphuism and, above all, the music and lovely rhythm of his prose are worthy of that great time, and in their very different way as fine as the original.

INTRODUCTION

That is high praise, but not too high for a work which is full of a curious beauty and, in spite of what modern ears will regard as defects, as successful as what we call Elizabethan translations so often were; things with their own qualities, their own delight, to English ears at least, and certainly very far from the modern attempt to be literal and the achievement of nothing but boredom and weariness. At least these Elizabethan translations do not for ever spoil the original for any casual reader. At least Bartholomew Yong can write English, which we may like all the better for being full of colour and conceits, full of melody and stateliness, where many a strange jewel flashes, not all of the first water, and some soon to be discarded for ever, but all bear witness to the wealth of the English tongue, which—and let this be reckoned a virtue in him—at least he knew how to use and how to spend.

EDWARD HUTTON.

Amorous Fiammetta

Wherein is set down a catalogue
of all and singular passions of Love and Jealousy,
incident to an enamoured young Gentlewoman, with a
notable caveat for all women to eschew deceitful and
vicked Love, by an apparent example of a Neapolitan
Lady, her approved and long miseries, and with
many sound debortations from the same.

First written in Italian by
Master John Boccace,
the learned Florentine, and Poet Laureate.

And now done into English by
B. Giovano
del M. Temp.

With Notes in the Margin, and with a Table in the end
of the chiefest matters contained in it.

Bel fine fa, chi ben amando muore.—Petrar. Lib. 10, Sonnetto 110.

At London,
Printed by J. C. for Thomas Gubbin,
and Thomas Newman

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL AND VIR-
TUOUS GENTLEMAN, SIR WILLIAM
HATTON KNIGHT



THE paltring Poet Cherillus dedicated his dancing poems to that mighty Monarch Alexander, saying, that he knew assuredly, if that he would not accept them in that they were not pithy, yet he would not utterly reject them in that they had a show of Poetry. Æmilius thinking to gratify that worthy conqueror Cæsar, with some curious piece of workmanship, waded so far in the depth of his art, as straining courtesy with cunning, he skipt beyond his skill, not being able to make it perfect. Who being blamed of his friend, for striving further than his sleeve would stretch, answered: that although art and skill were wanting to beautify the work, yet heart and will did polish that part which lack of cunning had left imperfect. Whose answer, as one guilty of a greater crime, I claim for a sufficient excuse of my folly, that durst enterprise to strive beyond my strength, knowing myself unable, both by nature and art, to bring this or any part thereof by mine own skill to a wise end. For if the Fowler is to be condemned of folly that takes in hand

DEDICATION

to talk of hunting, then may I well be dubbed a dolt, which being unskilful, dare take in hand to decipher the substance of Love, that am but a fool. But as there is no greater cooling card to a rash wit than want, so there is not a more speedy spur to a willing mind than the force of duty, which drove me in a double doubt, either to be counted as bold as blind Bayard, in presuming too far, or to incur the prejudice of ingratitude, in being too slow. But as wishes are of no value, so his will is vain that covets to pay his debts with counterfeit coin, therein I find the fault, and commit the offence. For being greatly indebted to my honourable good Lord by duty, for the first payment I offer, although not mine own labours, to you his honour's worthy Nephew, this small pamphlet of M. John Boccace a famous Poet, and translated by M. Bartholomew Young of the middle temple, a piece of work worthy the wearing, in that it sheweth the manner how to eschew deceitful and wicked love : which considered, although wisdom willed me to go (non *Ultra crepidā*), I thought good to present this pamphlet under your worship's protection : hoping you will deign to accept the matter although it be but prose, though something unsavoury for want of skill, yet accept the Author's well meaning for his and my boldness, in that his skill and my good will is not in the wane, whatsoever this work doth want. The Emperor Trajan never wanted suitors because so courteously he would hear

DEDICATION

every man's complaint. All that courted Atalanta were hunters: where Mæcenas lodgeth, scholars will flock. And your worship being a worthy fosterer of the learned, hath forced my author by your virtue, and me by duty, to offer these his fruits at the shrine of your worship's courtesy. Beseeching the almighty to send you health, wealth and prosperity. Your worship's to command in all duty,

THOMAS NEWMAN.

TO THE NOBLE AND GALLANT DAMES
OF THE CITY OF CASTALE IN MON-
FERRATO GABRIEL GIOLITO



AMONGST the finest and vulgar prose of that most excellent and learned Clerk, Master John Boccace, written for your profit and consolation, there is none (most noble Ladies) which you ought to hold more dear, and esteem more precious, than this present work, entitled (*Amorous Fiammetta*). Because containing in it the sighs, the tears, and prolonged miseries of an enamoured young Gentlewoman forsaken of her Lover, who doth not conceive this very same to be set forth as a sovereign example, and sole instruction for you all. Not that by the condemned ingratitude of one young man you should learn generally to despise all men, but rather because, knowing by another how dangerous a thing it is lightly and quickly to give credence to every one his promise, Love being a natural fire to burn the bravest and most gentle minds, and inclining yourselves to love, you may select and choose out such a subject, that afterwards the like repentance, and a worse condition perhaps than *Fiammetta* had, may not befall unto you.

DEDICATION

Whereupon myself, who was born to do you all the service I can, having with all diligence corrected this Book, and committed it to the press, I thought it most beseeeming my devoyre to bring it to light, authorized under your worthy names, and shadowed (I hope) under the favourable wings of your assured ampare and defence. Read it therefore, and discouraging among yourselves the dolorous complaints of that miserable and hapless Lady Fiammetta : by her disastrous and adverse Fortune learn you (fair Ladies) to be wiser and better advised. And having the name and title of the fairest and noblest Ladies in Italy, assume also the praise and commendation upon you of the wisest and most pitiful Gentlewomen in the same. Because a woman's ornament is not in her cruelty enclosed, or in her austereness, and none amongst them was ever commended for an unworthy enemy to men's affections. In the meanwhile I will not omit (gracious Ladies) hereafter to offer up to your high and sacred thoughts more noble matters, and of greater consequence.

THE AUTHOR HIS PROLOGUE

Fiammetta speaketh

MISERABLE men, when they perceive that others have compassion of their miseries, and see themselves to be pitied of some, are wont to take a certain kind of delight and pleasure in their sorrows and griefs. Because the occasion therefore, of my voluntary sorrow, by tract of long time and custom, is rather augmented than diminished in me, I think it not amiss, in telling and discoursing my bitter chances to you (most noble Ladies) in whose tender hearts love perhaps doth dwell more happily than in mine, to attempt to fill (if possibly I may) the same with pity and compassion. And I reck not whether my speeches come to men's ears or no, but will rather hide them as much as I may, from them all : because the cruel dealings of one false man are here so invectively discovered of me, that others imagining the like, I might sooner expect with their scorns and taunts to be flouted, than to be pitied with their sorrowful tears.

I beseech you (gentle Ladies) to read it, whom I know by my own self naturally inclined to commiseration of my misfortunes. You shall not, in

THE AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE

reading of it, find any Grecian fables depainted and set forth with plausible lies, nor Trojan wars foul and loathsome by deadly gore, but Amorous battles procured and maintained by innumerable pricking desires, in the which shall be presented before your eyes the miserable tears, the overwhelming and burning sighs, the doleful complaints, and the boisterous and tempestuous thoughts, which continual stings, piercing my troubled soul, have taken from me my wonted appetite, deprived me of my sweet sleep, exiled my joyful times, and (O death to my remembrance) despoiled me of my peerless and dearest beauty. All which things, if you will every one by herself, or else all together, with that pitiful heart behold, which for the most part all women have, then assuredly I persuade myself that you will bathe your delicate cheeks with streams of gushing tears, which are to me a material cause and chief occasion (despairing of all hope and comfort to come) of perpetual anguish and grief of mind. I pray you therefore (tender-hearted Ladies and Gentlewomen) not to withhold them, but let them issue from their forced fountains, thinking with yourselves that if your fortunes, which are not very steadfast and sure, should chance (which the Gods forbid) to be semblable to mine, how dear and grateful a thing should it be to you, if in lieu of your lamentations, and for your hard haps, I should pour forth some tears again. But because the time (spent more in

THE AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE

words, than wailings) may not slide away, I will force myself briefly to come to the performance of my promise, beginning first with my happy and steadfast love, because deducing in argument from that former felicity, to this present state and condition of life, you may both know and call me the most unfortunate woman that lives. And from thence I will (as well as I can) with a ruthful and deploring style, prosecute these unlucky accidents, which not causeless make me so grievously moan and lament. But first (if miserable souls are heard), wretched woman as I am, bathed in my own tears, I do implore some heavenly deity (if any there be), whose holy mind (moved with pity of my distressed fare) to help my doleful memory, and to direct my trembling hand in this present work, and being oppressed, to add such force and vigour to them again, that, what anguish and bitter griefs I have sustained, and do yet feel in my tormented mind, even such the one recording the words and stratagems, and the other (more willing than able to such an office) may fully and wholly write them down.

CONTENTS

Introduction	Page vii
Dedication	xliii
The Author his Prologue	xlix

THE FIRST BOOK

<i>Fiammetta her dream in the which all her future infelicity is showed and set down</i>	4
<i>A presage signifying the adverse success of her love</i>	6
<i>The description of the young Gentleman whom Fiammetta did choose for her lover</i>	10
<i>The speeches of Fiammetta her nurse tending to her reprehension</i>	22
<i>Fiammetta her answer unto them</i>	22
<i>Venus appearing to Fiammetta doth with many words persuade her to love</i>	30
<i>The means that Panphilus observed to manifest his love to Fiammetta</i>	45
<i>The end of Fiammetta her amorous desires</i>	48

THE SECOND BOOK

<i>Panphilus unfoldeth to Fiammetta the occasion con- straining him to depart from her</i>	60
<i>Fiammetta her answer again, wherewith she laboureth to withdraw him from his resolute journey</i>	62

CONTENTS

THE SECOND BOOK—*continued*

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Panphilus doth swear never to be any other woman's than Fiammetta's</i>	70
<i>Sundry speeches used of them both the day and night before his journey</i>	77
<i>In what plight Fiammetta remained after his departure</i>	82, 83

THE THIRD BOOK

<i>Divers perplexed thoughts of Fiammetta</i>	87
<i>Fiammetta, by a letter that Panphilus sent her, augmenteth her hope of his return</i>	91
<i>The great jealousy and amorous suspicions of Fiammetta</i>	92
<i>Fiammetta counting the days and noting the season and course of the year doth afflict herself</i>	96
<i>A certain custom and manner of them that love</i>	97
<i>Fiammetta doth spend the nights in vigils, gazing on the moon; and divers other things continually fixing Panphilus in her thoughts</i>	100
<i>Fiammetta doth blame the moon, accusing her of too great slowness in her course</i>	100
<i>A short discourse of Fiammetta pertaining to Astrology</i>	100
<i>Fiammetta hath divers means to pass away the long days and nights with less annoy</i>	108
<i>Fiammetta her imagination, thinking that she is with her Panphilus</i>	104
<i>The force of a dream</i>	105
<i>What Fiammetta's thoughts were after the promised term of Panphilus his return was past</i>	111

CONTENTS

THE FOURTH BOOK

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Fiammetta doth understand by a certain merchant that Panphilus is married in his own country .</i>	122
<i>Fiammetta believing the news to be true doth lament and bewail with herself</i>	124
<i>Her hope of seeing Panphilus again being extinct, and love and desire increasing more and more, doth blame herself for using certain words in her anger against him</i>	138
<i>Fiammetta her prayers to Venus</i>	144
<i>The hard condition of Fiammetta</i>	146
<i>The praise and properties of sleep invoked of Fiammetta</i>	149
<i>Fiammetta her husband perceiving her continual sorrow, and demanding the occasion of it, cannot truly know it</i>	152
<i>Fiammetta invited of her husband to visit the healthful and sweet baths of Baia goeth thither with him, but change of air not applying any remedy to her amorous fire doth augment it more</i>	153
<i>Divers solaces showed Fiammetta by her husband doth kindle a desire in her to see Panphilus again .</i>	157
<i>Fiammetta, constrained to go to feasts, beholding her altered hue and pale face in a glass, hath a certain fear of herself</i>	160
<i>The glee and mirth of other gentlewomen, putting Fiammetta in mind of her passed joys, redoubleth her tears</i>	165
<i>An extraordinary paleness in her face is a sign of an enamoured heart</i>	169

CONTENTS

THE FOURTH BOOK—continued

	<i>Page</i>
<i>No love so fervent, nor beset with so many woes, as Fiammetta's was</i>	171
<i>The exterior heats ceasing, the flames of love are nevertheless augmented</i>	182
<i>Care of the mind is a great annoyance</i>	184
<i>Certain kinds and exercises of fishing</i>	184
<i>Fiammetta her vain hope to see Panphilus again</i>	185
<i>An ancient custom used in Fiammetta her city to invite ladies and gentlewomen to lords' houses, at times of their most solemn feasts</i>	191
<i>The praise of divers young gentlemen, before whom Fiammetta preferreth her Panphilus</i>	191
<i>The manner of jousting</i>	192
<i>The praise of a solitary life, and of theirs who do inhabit villages</i>	198
<i>The praise of the Golden World, and dispraise of the present age</i>	202
<i>Fiammetta, not caring to wear any more her wonted ornaments, is of certain gentlewomen her companions reproved for it</i>	208
<i>Beauty is but a doubtful and frail gift of mortal men</i>	213
<i>Fiammetta her prayers to the Gods</i>	217

THE FIFTH BOOK

<i>One of Fiammetta her servants, returned from Panphilus his country, doth tell her, that he is not married but in love with another gentlewoman there</i>	223
lvi	

CONTENTS

THE FIFTH BOOK—continued

	Page
<i>Fiammetta her lamentation</i>	225
<i>Fiammetta never loved any but Panphilus</i>	230
<i>Fiammetta's husband, perceiving her to lament and weep in her bed, and dreams, doth ask her the cause thereof, and with many loving words doth comfort her again</i>	234
<i>Fiammetta with cruel maledictions doth reprehend and condemn herself</i>	245
<i>The Nurse with many reasons doth study to cheer up Fiammetta</i>	251
<i>A cruel and desperate invocation of Fiammetta against herself, and against Panphilus his new beloved mistress</i>	251
<i>Fiammetta doth desire death</i>	254
<i>Fiammetta doth show that the pains of hell are less than hers</i>	262
<i>Fiammetta her Nurse blaming her again doth endeavour to comfort her</i>	263
<i>Tears conjoined with beauty are of great force</i>	264
<i>Fiammetta doth meditate on divers kinds of death to kill herself</i>	266
<i>The reasons that Fiammetta scorned for to kill herself</i>	266
<i>Fiammetta, determined the second time to kill herself, is intercepted of the Nurse, and of her other women</i>	274
<i>Divers Gentlewomen promise divers remedies to Fiammetta</i>	286

CONTENTS

THE SIXTH BOOK

	<i>Page</i>
<i>A description of Springtide</i>	289
<i>The misery of Fiammetta</i>	291
<i>The Nurse doth bring news to Fiammetta that Panphilus is nigh at hand</i>	293
<i>Fiammetta her prayers to Venus</i>	297
<i>Fiammetta recomforted, believing that Panphilus is on his way, doth take again her forsaken ornaments, and waxeth fair again</i>	302
<i>The Nurse doth tell Fiammetta that whom she thought was the right Panphilus was another of the same name, wherefore she doth return to her former woes</i>	309

THE SEVENTH BOOK

<i>Two occasions moving Fiammetta to sustain her amorous pains with less grief</i>	315
<i>Fiammetta compareth her pains with the griefs of many other unfortunate lovers, and findeth none equal with hers</i>	316
<i>Io, beloved of Jupiter, transformed into a fair heifer, after many sustained and passed travails, became at last Queen of Egypt</i>	317
<i>Biblis, Mirrha and Canace came to divers sharp and cruel ends</i>	318
<i>Thisbe, Dido, Hero</i>	319
<i>Sir Tristram, Isotta, Phedra, Laodamia, Argia and others</i>	323
<i>Jocasta, Hecuba, Sophonisba and others</i>	325

CONTENTS

THE SEVENTH BOOK—*continued*

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Cornelia, first Cræsus his wife, and afterwards Pompey his Spouse</i>	334
<i>Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt</i>	335
<i>Cyrus, Cræsus and others</i>	338
<i>Theistes, Tereus and Lycurgus</i>	339
<i>Atalanta, mother of Parthenope</i>	340
<i>Ulysses</i>	341
<i>Hipsiphile, Medea, Œnone and Ariadne</i>	343
<i>FIAMMETTA HER SPEECH TO HER BOOK</i>	349

The end of the Table

Il fait bon fin qui meurt pour bien aymer

Il decimo l' Anno terzo d' Aprile 1587

THE FIRST BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA

N the time when the revested earth doth show itself more pleasant and fair than in any other season of the year : born of most noble parents, and received here of bountiful and favourable Fortune, I came into this World.

Accursed be that day, and hated of me more than any other, in the which I first enjoyed this common light. How happy had I been (alas) if I had never been born, or if I had at the time of my unfortunate birth been carried to my grave, or had not breathed any longer time than the teeth sown of Cadmus : or else, if Lachesis, at one and selfsame hour, had begun and cut in two her vital thread : because then, in that small time of life, these infinite woes, which are now a sorrowful occasion to put my pen to Paper, should with the same have been concluded. But what doth it now avail for these causes to lament : for here I am nevertheless by the general decrees and pleasures of the Gods.

Being received then (as I have said) in most high delights, and nourished only amongst them,

THE FIRST BOOK

and in my young and tender years brought up under a reverend and sage Matron, I early learned every good quality, which was most convenient and commendable for any young and noble Woman. And as my personage did with passed years increase, so were my beauties also multiplied, which were the only and especial occasions of all my sorrows and infinite griefs. Alas (although I was yet but a little one) how greatly did I glory with myself, in hearing my commendations in everyone's mouth, and did therefore with art and industry daily study to make them more perfect and curious.

But arrived now from my childhood, to a more full and riper age, and conceiving, by the instincts of nature, with what burning desires
*Beauty
hurtful to
her that
hath it* amorous young Gentlewomen may entice young and wanton youths, I perceived that my surpassing beauty (a miserable gift to her who loves to lead a virtuous life) did not only incend most of all those young Gentlemen, who lived at the time in flourishing youth like myself, but many other noblemen, with a fervent and amorous fire : who infinite times with divers drifts, many means, and sundry flights (unknown to me as then), did attempt to kindle me with that fire wherewith they themselves did burn, and that it should not then only scorch me, but in process of time, 'in long and lingering flames, utterly consume me. And of many with earnest suit, as well to my Parents, as especially

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

to me, I was requested in marriage. But after that one among all the rest (a most absolute (in my opinion) and perfect Gentleman) had won that prize, for which they strived all, the importunous and troublesome rout of wooers (being now past all hope) did cease to solicit me any more with their cunning and daily pursuits. Wherefore remaining in just content with my loving Husband, I lived a most happy and joyful Woman, until furious Love with a secret kind of unknown fire, and never felt of me before, entered into my tender and young breast. Alas there was not anything, that might satisfy either my desire, or any Woman's else, which presently I had not for my pleasure and contentation. I was the only joy and singular felicity of my young Husband, and as he was truly beloved of me, so did he equally and greatly love me again.

O how happy might I have thought myself above all other Women, if this new love had for ever continued inviolated in my heart? Living therefore in great happiness, and spending my youthful years in daily sports, and joyful feasts, false Fortune, the sudden changer of worldly things, and most envious of the selfsame goods that she had erst bestowed on me, purposing now to withdraw her hand, and not knowing by what means to spit forth her venom, with subtle and Sophistical arguments made an adverse way (leading to the Dungeon of sorrow) open to mine eyes. And truly by no other means,

THE FIRST BOOK

but by those by which fond Love entered into my heart she could entrap me, or use her force at all, but the Gods favourable to me, and careful of my affairs, perceiving her covert and malicious guiles, did intend to arm my yielding heart and feeble breast with weapons, if I had been so wise to have taken and used them for my defence, because I might come forewarned and not unarmed to the battle in the which I should inevitably have fallen. Wherefore with a manifest vision in my dreams, the very night before the day (that dismal day I say) did come, which was the sorrowful beginning of my endless pains, and loss of liberty, they did clearly admonish me of future accidents in this sort.

Methought lying in a fair broad bed, with every part of my body resolved into deep sleep, I saw the
Dreams fairest and brightest day that might be,
sometimes and myself (I know not how) more jocant
foretell and merry than ever I had been before.
things to And joying all alone in this kind of mirth,
come I did imagine that I sat in a sweet Meadow, upon the green grass, and amongst many golden and pleasant flowers, defended from the heat of the Sun, and from his parching beams, with many cool shadows of divers Trees, newly apparelled with thick and green leaves. And having gathered many flowers in the same, wherewith all that place was most bravely depainted, with my little white hands I did separate one from another as they lay confused and mingled

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

in my lap, and with the finest that I could pick out I made a fair and little Garland, wherewith I did adorn my stately head. Beautified thus, and rising up (as Proserpina did, when Pluto did ravish her from her mother), I went singing up and down in this pleasant and trim Meadow, rejoicing at the entrance of merry Springtide. And afterwards, feeling myself somewhat weary, I laid me down amongst the thickest and freshest grass to rest myself a little. But like as that little hidden Viper did prick Euridice's tender foot, even so a lurking and creeping Serpent did likewise appear to my sight, as I lay along upon the soft and thick grass, the which (methought) did with her cruel tongue sting me under the left pap, which venomous biting, at the first entrance of her sharp teeth, did seem to burn me like a scalding and fiery flame. And then being almost assured, and past fear of the worst, methought I put the cold Serpent into my burning bosom, imagining that, with the benefit of her cold skin, she should a little ease me, and be more favourable unto me for this gentle deed. But emboldened rather by the same, and now become more fierce than before, to the foresaid sting she rejoined her cruel mouth, and having after a good while sucked a great quantity of my vital blood, methought, that merely going out from my wounded bosom (though I did strive to the contrary), she went also away with my fainting soul. At the departing of which, the golden day obscured, and (like

THE FIRST BOOK

a shadow driven by the Sun coming behind me) did cover me all over, after which followed a foggy and misty darkness, accompanied with multitudes of black and thick clouds, which, hanging upon it, did seem to be drawn after, and like a confused and deformed Chaos to follow. And not long after (as a little white stone cast into a deep and clear water, doth by little and little vanish away from the sight of them that do behold it), even so was the brightness of this Sunshine day taken away from my dimmed sight. Then might I perceive the Heavens to be overcome with darkness, and the gladsome Sun retired back, and obscure night approaching, made me call to mind, that this sudden alteration was not unlike unto that which happened to the Grecians,

*Atreus his
fault was,
that he made
the Father,
which was
his brother,
to eat his
own Son,
whereupon
the Sun
retired
back again,
because it
would not see
so wicked
a mess and
table*

when the Sun did hide his face, because he would not for shame behold the enormity of Atreus his foul fault. The fearful lightnings piecemeal glanced up and down in the air, and cracking thunders made the earth, but me most of all, afraid. And the wound, which until this time had but only stung me (methought) by reason of the late biting, remaining now full of viperous venom, overran and occupied all my body with most filthy and loathsome swellings, no secrets of physic being able to cure the same. Whereupon feeling myself at the first without any spirit, and afterwards the force of the

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

poison by more subtle entrances searching every vein of my heart, I tumbled and tossed myself up and down the green grass, expecting always when death would assail me. And now the final hour (to my thinking) being come, terrified also with the horror of the time, and with the extreme grief of my infected heart, attending the mortal stroke of death, made me to think and start on a sudden in such sort that it caused my deadly sleeping body to shake again, and so break me out of that horrible and ghastly dream.

After the which (as it was very sudden), and not a little afraid also of those things which (methought) I had seen, with my right hand I made great speed to my bitten left side, seeking that presently there, which was afterwards prepared for me in time to come. But yet when I found no wound, nor any sign thereof, passing merry again, and careless, I began to deride, and laugh at the foolishness of dreams, and so accounted the labour of the Gods herein but vain. But wretch that I am, how justly (though then I scorned them) have I afterwards to my great grief of mind believed, and found them most true, and planted them without any fruit, being no less grieved at the Gods, who declare their secrets to uncapable minds with so great obscurity, the which no sooner showed, but incontinently they happen. Being therefore thoroughly awaked, I lifted up my head, and by a little crevice in the door did see Titan forsake Aurora's Chamber, and enter into

THE FIRST BOOK

mine. Wherefore casting all such fond conceits aside, I rose up.

That was a high and festival day almost to all the world, in the which everyone, to honour the solemnity of it, attired themselves with their best and bravest robes : wherefore, apparelling myself most curiously with garments woven with shining Gold, and with cunning and skilful hand setting everything in every part about me in the finest order, and adorned like to the fairest of those three Goddesses which Paris saw in the Valleys of Ida, I prepared myself to go to this solemn and high feast. And while I was beholding myself on every side, not otherwise than the Peacock doth her gay Feathers, and imagining as well to please others, as myself, one of my flowers (broken from my crown by the Curtain of the bed, or else perhaps plucked from my head by some celestial and invisible hand) fell from my head to the ground. But I taking no regard of the secret operations of the Gods, and esteeming it as nothing, took it up, and put it in his former place again, and so passed it slightly over.

Alas what more manifest sign could the Gods give me of that, which afterwards did happen, than this. Truly none at all. This had been sufficient enough to declare unto me, that my soul, that day so free, and mistress of itself, laying down her sweet signory, should be made servile and bond, as it happened indeed. Oh, if my mind had been sound, how had I not

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

then foreknown the day (that blackest day), that afterwards happened unto me, and had safely overpassed it without going once out of my doors. But the Gods although they lend them (with whom they are angry) certain signs and tokens of their welfare, yet do they nevertheless deprive them of the due knowledge of the same. And so in one hour seem to do their willing devoyre, and to fulfil their wrathful minds. My hard destinies therefore did (as it were) drive me on forwards like a vain and careless Woman, and being accompanied wjth many Gentlewomen, that served on my train, with a soft and stately pace, I went to the holy Temple, in which the solemn and divine office, due for that day, was celebrated. The antiquity of my generous predecessors, and my nobility also, had reserved a high place for me, amongst other most excellent and worthy Ladies there, in the which, after that I was set, observing my old custom, which was in suddenly casting mine eyes round about, I saw the Church equally full of Men and Women, in divers companies, diversely to employ themselves. But no sooner was I espied in the Temple, though in the midst of sacred service time, but (as it was a common thing many times before so then did it also fall out) that not Men only, but every woman did turn their eyes towards me, to behold me : and wondering at me, as if Venus or Minerva (never seen of them before) had been verily come down from Heaven amongst them.

THE FIRST BOOK

Oh, how many times did I smile with myself, feeling such content to tickle me, and glorying in myself no less than a Goddess, being not a little proud of all these most happy favours. All the company therefore of young Gentlemen, leaving off (at sight of me) to gaze upon other Gentlewomen (of which there was no small number of rare and passing beauty), and placing themselves about me, did in manner of a Crown compass me round about. And everyone, after *A fine description of a trim woman* his own fancy, speaking and diversely discoursing of my beauty, but all concurring and concluding in one sentence, did highly extol and commend it. But I, who with mine eyes turned another way made a semblance to busy my mind in devotions, but giving attentive care to their talk, did conceive and feel in myself a certain kind of desired pleasure and content. Wherefore thinking, and showing myself greatly beholding unto them, with a gracious eye and pleasant regard, I did sometimes requite them again. Whereupon I might many times perceive, that many of them, fondly conceiving and gathering a little vain hope thereof, did greatly glory, and foolishly rejoice with their companions for the same supposed favours.

Whilst I remained thus, looking but a little on a few, and beheld greatly of many, and thinking that my beauty should captivate others, it chanced that another's most unfortunately entrapped me. And

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

being now near to that dolorous passage, which of most certain death, or else of such a kind of life, that should be full of anguish and sorrow, might have been a sorrowful and sinister occasion, I knew not with what spirit moved, but with a seemly grace lifting up mine eyes, with an earnest and sharp view I sped their beams amidst the multitude of young Gentlemen, that did environ me round about. And *Fiametta is enamoured in the Temple* beyond them all I espied a proper young Gentleman, leaning upon a Marble pillar, as directly object to my sight as might be. And instigated by my pursuing destinies, I began to mark his personage, and his behaviour, which of any other before, I had never to do so much. I say therefore, that (according to my slender judgment, which was not yet very ripe about love matters) in his countenance he was passing fair and amiable, in his actions sweet and pleasant, and in his attire decent and comely. And the little golden and crisped wool which began to appear on his lovely cheeks did give a manifest sign of his young and flourishing age. Who being no less pitiful (as it seemed) than wise, omitted not, between Man and Man, to requite me with loving looks again. And though I had sometimes the power to withdraw mine eyes a little while from beholding him, yet no accident whatsoever, no, not myself (though striving to the contrary) could make me leave off to traverse many strange and uncouth thoughts in my mind. And so lively was his very

THE FIRST BOOK

counterfeit, and sweet Idea imprinted in my heart, that with what secret delight I did contemplate the same, I am not able to express. And with many arguments did affirm with myself all these things, which did appear in him, to be most true. Wherefore being most contented in mind, and wishing that he would eye me again, I cast sometimes a glance aside, to mark if he did look upon me.

But amongst many other times that I beheld him (unable to defend myself from the secret snares of love), fixing mine eyes at one time somewhat longer upon his than I was wont to do, and the piercing beams of his fair eyes encountering with mine, methought that with a pitiful and sweet countenance he seemed to speak these words: "O Lady, thou art mine only joy and singular felicity." Truly if I should say, that these words did not work an extraordinary delight in me, I should flatly lie: the supposition of which did so highly please me, that from the centre of my heart they drew forth a sweet and profound sigh, which came accompanied with these words: "And thou art mine." But that remembering myself, I took them from my mouth. But what did it avail? That which was not expressed and uttered forth, my heart did conceive and imagine with itself, retaining that in it, which if it had gone forth, perhaps I should have yet been free. Then from that time forward, making my foolish eyes the

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

whole arbiters of that, the good whereof they were so greedy to enjoy, I did (methought) in so doing greatly content and please them. And certes if the Gods, who deduct all things to some known and certain end, had not taken away my understanding, and bereaved me of my due knowledge, I might have still been mine own woman. But all such considerations laid aside, I followed my sensual appetite, and quickly persuaded myself to yield to love. Because no otherwise than the elementary coruscations shooting themselves from one part of the air to another, a shining light issuing from out his clear eyes, and running by a most subtle and fine beam, did meet and hit directly against mine, which contending to pass farther, by what secret ways (I know not) suddenly went penetrating to my very heart, which fearing their violent entrance, and calling to it all her exterior forces, left me altogether pale and cold. But their abode was not so long there, but the greatest fear was past, and then were they welcomed with a hot and burning passion : whereupon the foresaid forces returning to their places again, brought with them a certain heat, which driving all paleness quite away, painted my face like the vermilion Rose, and made me burn as hot as fire. And yet, beholding from whence all this did proceed, I could not but breathe out a sorrowful sigh. And from that hour forward, my thoughts were occupied in nothing else, but meditating of his brave

THE FIRST BOOK

personage, and apparent virtues, and especially in imagining how to please him.

In all these intercourses, without changing of place or countenance, he did most privily steal now and then a look at me again. And peradventure as one who had been a tried Soldier in other amorous battles, and knowing with what Engines his wished prey might best be taken, with arguments of greater humility, continually he showed himself more pitiful, and full of amorous desires. Alas how much deceit was hidden under the veil of that pity, which (according as the present effects do testify) being now mortified in his heart, where it never remained again), bear only but an outward show and visard of love. And because I may prosecute every thing and action in particular, whereof there was not any which was not fraught with rare fraud and cunning guile, whether it was he that voluntarily did work it, or my unlucky stars that would have it so, thus it fell out, that (wanting the due skill exactly to show you how) I found myself entangled with sudden and unlooked for love, as at this present I am not free from the same.

This therefore was he (most pitiful Ladies) whom my conquered heart with a foolish conceit, amongst
Naples so many noble, beautiful and valiant young Gentlemen, that were not only there present, but also in all my Parthenope, did choose to be the first, the only, and last Lord, and master of my

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

life. This was he whom I loved, and do love still more than anyone in all the world besides. This was he who was the beginning and principal occasion of all my woes, and shall be (as I hope) the final cause of my tragical death at last. This was that day in the which, first of a most free and happy Lady, I became a most miserable and unhappy captive. This was that day, in the which I did first apprehend the miserable effects of foolish love, never known of me before. This was that day, wherein venereous venoms contaminated first my pure and chaste beauty. Alas, poor wretch, how many sorrows, and what misery came this day into the world to thee, by thine own default. How far (alas) should annoy and grief have been from me, if this day had been turned into darkness : and how great an enemy was this day to my unstained honour.

But evil things (alas) which are committed and past may be easier reprehended than amended. I

All things which are done, may be sooner controlled than remedied was therefore taken (as I have said), and whether it was some infernal fury, or envious fortune, which did so emulate my chaste felicity, laying snares to entrap me, may this day with hope of infallible victory triumph and rejoice in my miserable fall.

Being therefore possessed, nay rather oppressed with new kinds of passions, as one astonied and like a defenceless Woman I sat amongst the other Ladies and Gentlewomen. And troubled thus in mind, I

THE FIRST BOOK

did neglect the sacred and divine service, which as I did scarcely hear, so did I not understand it at all : and thought the sundry speeches and discourses of Gentlewomen, that sat round about me, but a kind of buzzing and murmuring in my troubled ears. And so this new and unexpected love did take sudden possession of my tender heart, so that either with mine eyes or with my thoughts I was ever contemplating on my beloved young Gentleman. And yet my simplicity was such, that I did not almost then know what end I might wish or desire of such a strange and fervent passion. How many times (alas) coveting to have seen him approach near unto me, did I blame his staying behind all the rest of the Gentlemen, thinking with myself that that was but a cold kind of affection in him, which he did perhaps craftily use, and for a policy, to make me more desirous to look on him, and in looking to love him more.

And moreover, the company of lusty youths, that stood before him, did greatly hinder my sight, of whom, whilst that I busied mine eyes in looking sometimes amongst them, there were not a few that (thinking, that for their sakes I looked so much towards them) did vainly perhaps believe that I did it for love of them. But while my thoughts and senses were occupied in these fancies, the solemn service was finished : and the Ladies and the rest of my companions were risen up to depart, when I, recalling

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

my wits together, which went wandering about the sweet imagination and figure of their only object, at the last I beheld my lovely young Gentleman again. And now myself risen up with the other Gentlewomen ready to be gone, and turning mine eyes towards him, I perceived that by his pitiful looks (which I had thought to have prevented by mine) that his departure, and mine did greatly grieve him. But notwithstanding, after certain secret sighs, and yet ignorant of what parentage, estate and condition he was, I went away.

Alas (gentle Ladies) who would believe it possible that one's heart in a moment and point of time should alter and change so much ? Who would say that a man never seen before might be so extremely loved at the first sight ? And who would think that the desire of seeing should be so fervently kindled in one's breast, as the very sight itself, and being deprived of that, to feel the greatest pain in the world, for desire to see the same thing again ? Who would imagine that all those things that have been so joyful and delightful to us before, in respect of a new thing come

How love is engendered in divers parts of the body successively in place, should not yield any more pleasure at all ? Not anyone truly, unless he had proved and felt them, as I do now. Alas that love is not only content to use such a strange, and too severe kind of cruelty towards me, but in subduing me to his might, to prescribe new Laws, clean variant from others. I have

THE FIRST BOOK

oftentimes heard that love in others at his first entrance is but light, but by nourished thoughts augmenting his force is made greater. But so it fared with me : for he entered into my heart with that same force, wherewith he continued ever afterwards, as one who at the very first assault had most entire and free possession of me. And like as the green wood, which is hardly at the first set on fire, and doth lie a long time before it receiveth flames, but after it is once kindled, with greater heat doth conserve the fire longer, even so it happened unto me, who with this kind of pleasing passion, never overcome of any before (though attempted of many) and at the last conquered of one, have burned and kept (as yet I do more sensibly) these new flames, that have taken more hold of me, than ever they did of any other, who before have assayed the like. But leaving aside many thoughts, which with divers accidents that morning turmoiled my troubled mind, and besides these, which now I have told, I say, that being incended with a new fury, with my captivated and bond soul I returned again thither, from whence (not long since) I had brought it free.

Where afterwards, that I was now come into my Chamber all alone, kindled with variety of burning desires surcharged with new thoughts, and pricked with a thousand stinging cares, terminating every end of them in the imagined apprehension of my young Gentleman, I thought, that if I could not

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

wean myself from this new love, at the least, in my secret and sorrowful breast, wisely to have nourished and governed the same, and warily to have brought it to some good effect. Which things, how difficult they are to perform, none can tell unless they prove them, undoubtedly believing, that they do no less harm than love itself. Wherefore, confirmed as it were in this opinion, I said thus to myself : “ Alas thou art in love, poor soul, and yet thou dost not know with whom.”

What kinds of cruel thoughts, and how many careful cogitations were engendered of this love, it should be too tedious for you dainty Ladies to hear, and too grievous for me to tell. But yet (though forcing myself thereunto) to obtain the more pity at your hands, and some comfort thereby, I mean to unfold some of them unto you. I say therefore, that careless of all other things, to spend the time in thinking of my beloved and amiable young Gentleman, was only most dear and pleasant unto me. And imagining with myself, that persevering in this, that which I did intend to conceal might perhaps have easily been presumed, I oftentimes found fault with myself for it. But what did it help ? My own reprehensions gave place to my desires, and like words of light worth passed away with the air. I chiefly desired, many days together, to know what my beloved youth was, to the understanding of which thing, new thoughts made me an open way, by means of which most warily and privily I knew it, and whereof

THE FIRST BOOK

I remained not a little contented. By goodly ornaments likewise, which (as one that little need them) were not before this time so much in request with me, began now to be greatly liked of me, thinking that being adorned with them, I might please the more. Wherefore I esteemed now more of gorgeous apparel, gold, pearls, and other precious stones, and gems, than ever I did before. And I, who until this time had frequented the holy Temples, Feasts, Sea banks, and pleasant Gardens, without any further intent or desire than to keep other Gentlewomen and Ladies company, began (altered now in mind) for new purposes to resort more often to the foresaid places, thinking, that there I might with pleasure not only behold, but with delight and desire be seen again. But the great affiance (truly) which I was wont to have in my beauty forsook me now quite, wherefore I never went out of my Chamber without the infallible counsel of my trusty Glass. And my cunning hands (I know not by what curious instructor newly taught) finding every day more brave and rare ornaments, conjoining artificial with natural beauty, did make me (like Venus star) shine amongst other Ladies. The great honours moreover, courtesies, and obeisance, which other Ladies and Gentlewomen of their mere good wills and duties did unto me, although indeed they were incident to my nobility, I now began to accept and expect as services duly and worthily belonging to my high estate,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

thinking that I should please my lover most of all, when by these means he did perceive, that I was of noble birth and lineage. And that common covetousness, which is naturally born and engrafted in all Women, did work in me (eschewing the same) no other effects, than to esteem all my riches, land and treasure, as if they had not been mine own : whereby I became not only liberal, but feeling also a certain seemly boldness to increase in me, made me devoid of all womanly and suspicious fear, accounting but one thing only dearer to me now than before. And besides all this, my eyes, which until this time had been but simple, and unexpert in amorous regards, changed their former fashions, and grew marvellous skilful in performing their parts. And I discovered moreover in me divers other mutations, all which, by one and one, I care not to set down, because, first, it would be too long a labour, and secondly, because I believe that you (fair Ladies), enamoured perhaps like myself, are not ignorant how great and many those are, which accompany lovers in like causes.

The young Gentleman was most wary and wise, as many times by experience I was sufficiently thereof ascertained. He came but seldom times, and that in most honest and seemly sort, where I was, and having (as it seemed) purposed the selfsame thing that I had done, which was to conceal altogether these amorous flames, did yet, with many privy and stealing looks, not a few times pitifully

THE FIRST BOOK

behold me. He did therefore make those kindled flames in me more fervent and lively, and revived those again (if any they were) that were spent and quite consumed in me. But the beginning of all this love was not so joyful and happy, but the sequel and end of it was more sorrowful and unfortunate, at what time I remained deprived of his sight, because these eyes being denied their wished joy did minister a grievous occasion to my poor heart of grief, whereupon my sighs both in quantity and quality were greatly augmented. And hot desire, occupying almost every least sense of mine, did make me live as one besides myself, as if I had not been there where I was, made many that saw me to wonder oftentimes at me, attributing afterwards infinite and feigned occasions (taught me only of love) to such strange and uncouth accidents. And besides all this, taking from me many times my sweet rest in the night-time, and appetite in the day, did drive me sometimes to certain sudden and furious kinds of actions, and transported my tongue into strange and fond speeches. Behold how my unaccustomed gorgeous apparel, my prodigal attire, my scalding and new sighs, my unwonted gesture, frantic fits, the loss of my rest, quietness and health, and many other things, which this new love brought with it, amongst many other Servants and familiars in my house, made a Nurse of mine especially to marvel much,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

who as she was burdened with many years, so in ripe wisdom and good experience she was not young at all. And who having sometimes known and tried the heat of Cupid's flames, and making semblance to the contrary, did oftentimes reprehend me, and my suspected follies. But finding me on a day laid upon my bed, and oppressed with deep melancholy and sadness, and perceiving by my face that I was overcharged with burdens of heavy thoughts, and seeing no company with me but herself, began thus to say unto me :

“ O Daughter, dearer to me than mine own heart strings, what cares do molest thee thus of late ? Now thou spendest not one hour (whom some-
The Nurse
her speech to times I was wont to see merry and free
Fiammetta from all pensiveness) without infinite cares, and burning sighs.”

Then after a great sigh, and often changing of my colour, turning me now this way, now that way, my tongue being scarce able to form and fashion one word aright, I answered her again :

“ O dear Nurse, no new thing doth annoy me, neither do I feel any more grief than I was wont to do, these natural courses only excepted, and influences, which, never keeping us in one stay and estate of life, make me at this present (more than they were wont) both painful and pensive.”

“ Thou verily dost deceive me, Daughter ”
(answered the old Nurse again), “ nor dost conceive how great a matter it is, to make temperate and

THE FIRST BOOK

advised persons believe one thing in words, and to show the contrary by demonstration. Thou needest not to keep that hidden from me, which many days since I did know to be in thee."

Alas when I heard her say so, surprised with great marvel and grief, knowing myself to be touched to the quick, with an angry countenance I said to her:

"Then if thou dost know, why dost thou ask? Wherefore I request no more at thy hands, but to conceal and keep that close which thou knowest."

"I will not, believe me," (said she again) "disclose that which is neither lawful nor reasonable to acquaint others withal, earnestly beseeching the Gods, that before I manifest (during the well-nigh finished course of my poor life) anything which (much or little) may turn to thy shame, or that may in any one jot prejudicate thy honour, honesty and virtuous name, the earth may open and swallow me alive. It is a good while since, my Daughter, that I learned to keep secrecy in matters (perhaps) of as great importance as this. And therefore live secure of this, admonishing thee to take diligent heed, and to be very careful, lest others know that by thy indirect dealings, and unadvised practices, which without report either of thyself, or of any other but thy outward countenance only, and mere behaviour, I have perceived. But if this kind of mad folly, into which (I know thou art rashly fallen) were beseeeming a Woman of thy estate, if thou wert as wise now,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

as of late thou wert, I would leave it to thine own consideration, being certain that my counsel herein should take no place, as a thing needless. But because this cruel Tyrant (to whom like a young and ignorant Woman, not taking any heed of him, and of his poisoned baits, thou hast simply subjected thyself) hath, together with thy sweet liberty, bereaved thee also of thy sound understanding, I think it not amiss to put thee friendly in remembrance, and humbly to entreat thee, that from thy impotent and chaste breast thou wouldst banish all wicked things, and naughty thoughts, and by oblivion consume these dishonest flames, and not to suffer thyself become a handmaid and bonds slave to most filthy hope. And now it is time to resist with force and courage,

*He that resisteth love
in the beginning doth
overcome it
in the end*

because whosoever doth stoutly resist, and oppose himself in the beginning, he may easily drive out this villainous and envious love, and like a worthy and wise Conqueror may safely triumph over him. But whosoever with continued thoughts and flattering imaginations doth continue and maintain it, may hardly, and too late, cast off his yoke, into the which voluntarily he did put his neck."

"Alas," (said I then) "how easy is it to talk of those things, and how difficult a matter to remedy them."

"Although" (said she again) "that they are very hard to be done, yet are they possible enough to be

THE FIRST BOOK

reformed, and ought to be performed. Thou seest, or (at the least if thou wilt) mayst see, that in following thine own fancies, thou hast (as it were) a certain kind of desire to ruinate the highness of thy birth, to obscure the great and shining fame of thy manifold virtues, to lose the flower of thy beauty, to blemish thy honour in this present world, and to discredit all those other good parts in thee besides, which ought of all Women to be kept holy and unstained, and especially of such as thou art, whose virtues (as in nobility thou art above the rest) should also shine above the rest. And besides all this, to hazard the loss of the gracious favour of thy noble Husband, whom thou hast so long (and yet dost) loved so well, and who entirely loveth thee again. Thou shouldest not truly have so much as a thought of idle love, neither do I think (if like a wise Woman thou dost but take sound counsel of thyself) that thou wilt, nor canst busy thy wits about it. But these old breasts of mine with many years worn out (of the which thou didst first suck out thy nourishing milk and living sustenance) even by these, most humbly I pray thee, that thou wouldst in these timorous occurrences succour thyself, and be careful both for thy health and honour, and in these thy perplexities not to reject my weak and willing comforts. And think moreover that an earnest will and desire to be made whole again is not the smallest part, and no little help to recover thy former health."

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Then I began thus to reply : “ O dear Nurse, well do I know that these things which thou tellest me are most true, but frantic fury compelleth
*A will to be
healed is
part of
health in
anyone that
is sick* me to follow that which is my bane, and my guilty mind, over-rash in her desires, attempts in vain to put thy counsel in practice, because that which reason willeth me to do is overcome by unruly will, which most mightily doth dominate in me. Love with his deity doth possess my heart, and there, with his mighty signory overruleth my subject mind. And how hard a matter it is for a feeble woman to resist his forces (ah, Nurse) thou knowest well enough.”

And having so said, overcome by the force of my grievous passion, and fainting, I fell between her arms. But she, troubled in mind more than before, with an austere countenance, and sharper speeches, began to discipline me thus : “ You wilful company of amorous and wanton young Gentlewomen, kindled with burning desires, and fiery lust, which spurring you forwards to impious idolatry, have fondly found out Love to be a God, who more justly deserveth the title and name of frantic fury, and call him the Son of Venus, saying that he deriveth his omnipotent power from the third Heaven, as though you would excuse your follies with a needless kind of necessity. O deceived souls, and utterly devoid of all reason, and most ignorant of that which you say. Sent from the infernal furies, with a sudden and swift flight he

THE FIRST BOOK

visiteth all the world, bringing to him that doth entertain him, not deity but despair, not friendly felicity, but fiendly folly, alighting on those whom he doth know to abound in superfluity of worldly goods, and to enjoy them with a vain and prodigal mind, and on him whom he thinketh fittest and most forward to make him place. And this is here most manifest by thee. Why, do we not see holy Venus to dwell oftentimes in little cottages, both profitable and necessary for our procreation? Yes, truly. But this, who by frenzy is called Love, coveting ever dissolute things, lodgeth in no other place but where happy Fortune doth smile, and where her gifts abound. This dainty one, disdaining no less sufficient food to satisfy nature, than necessary clothing, doth frame all his persuasions to delicate fare, and sumptuous attire, and so intermingling his secret and sweet poison with them, doth deceive and destroy unwary and ignorant souls. This, more willingly and often seen in high and princely Palaces, is seldom or never seen in poor and Country cottages. Because it is a certain precise pestilence, which doth choose out only brave and stately lodgings, as most agreeable in the end to his wicked practices. We see in poor and simple people, effects of good and quiet consequence, but in the rich, wallowing in pleasure, and shining in their abundance of gold (insatiable as well in this as in all things else) that he is (more than is requisite) for

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

the most part found : and that which he cannot do (who can do most) he doth desire, and especially endeavour to bring to pass. Among whom I perceive thee (most unhappy and unfortunate Mistress) to be one, who by too much wealth, ease and idle pleasure hast entered into these new and unbecoming cares.”

Whom, after I had a good while heard, I answered thus again : “ Hold thy peace, thou old and foolish dotard, and prate not thus against my God. Thou speakest voluntarily against him, thyself being no less impotent for these effects, than justly cast of all men, blaspheming him now, whom in time of thy younger years thou diddest religiously adore. If other Ladies, more noble, wiser and more famous than myself, have heretofore thus entitled him, and cease not yet to call him by the name of a mighty God, how can I then alone give him any new or devised name ? To be plain with thee, I am become his Subject, but from whence the occasion of this allegiance doth spring, I neither know nor can tell thee. And what can I do more ? My feminine forces, conjoined oftentimes with his celestial power, are overcome, and constrained to retire back again. Wherefore there resteth no more for the end of my new and mortal pains but my near death, or else the enjoying of my wished love, which woes I pray thee to mitigate (if thou art so wise as I esteem thee) by thy sage counsel and speedy help, which will perhaps lessen them at the least, or else by thy bitter reprehensions surcease

THE FIRST BOOK

to exasperate and make them greater, blaming that in me which my soul (not able to do otherwise) with all the power and force it hath is wholly disposed to follow." She departed therefore out of my Chamber somewhat offended (as she had indeed good cause) at this my peremptory answer, not giving me one word again, but murmuring (I know not what) with herself, leaving me all alone.

Now was my loving Nurse I say gone, without speaking any more to me, whose counsels though unadvisedly rejected of me, yet I, remaining all alone, pondered all her words in my careful breast. And (although my understanding was obscured with misty clouds of senseless love), I found in them nevertheless a sweet and relished taste, which making my heart, touched as it were with repentance, with a wavering and unconstant mind I did consider better of that which (even now I told her) I had resolved to follow. Wherefore beginning now to think and to persuade myself to let this doubtful and dangerous matter pass away, I thought it good to call her back again for my needful comfort : but this good motion was quickly countermanded by a new and sudden accident. Because lying all alone in my secret Chamber, a most fair Lady (not knowing from whence she came) appeared before mine eyes, glittering with such shining light, that compassed her round about, that my dazzled eyes might scarce

*In this place
one may
see how
contrary
sensuality
is to reason*

*Venus doth
appear
unto her*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

behold her, who standing thus before me, without either moving or speaking, as much as by the golden light I might illuminate and sharpen my eyes, so far forth did I cast their beams, until at last her beautiful form, and formal feature of her body, was fully arrived to my perfect knowledge. Whom when I did

*A fine description
of a fair
woman*

clearly see to be all naked, saving only a thin veil of fine purple silk, which (although it covered some part of her snow-white body)

did nevertheless abridge my sight in looking at her no more than if I had beheld some goodly figure or Image enclosed in crystal or clear glass. Her majestic head, the hair whereof did so much exceed gold in brightness as the golden colour of ours passeth the yellowest and softest in fairness, was crowned with a fine Garland of green Myrtles, under the shadow of which, I saw two eyes of incomparable beauty, and passing lovely to behold, did cast forth a marvellous and splendant brightness, and all the rest of her fair face was in like proportion adorned with such divine beauty that her like on earth might not (I think) be found. She spake not a word, glorying perhaps in herself, to see me gaze on her so much, or else to please and delight me, perceiving me so greatly content and desirous to behold her, yet at length, by little and little in the transparent and shining light, more clearly discovering to me the fairest parts of her dainty body, because she knew that with my unable tongue I could not rehearse her exceeding

THE FIRST BOOK

beauties nor (without evident sight of them) imagine any such to live amongst mortal men. Which admirable beauties, when she perceived, that I had severally and earnestly marked, and to marvel no less at the rare perfection of them, as to wonder at her coming thither, with a pleasant and mild countenance, and with an angelical voice, she began to speak thus unto me :

“ Young Lady, and of all others most noble, what dost thou intend to do, disturbed by the new counsels of thy old Nurse ? Knowest thou not, that these are more intricate and harder to follow than love itself, from which so fondly thou desirest to flee ? Dost thou not conceive what great and intolerable sorrow they keep in store for thee, most foolish woman, once and even now ours, and by the babble of the old woman dost now fear to be ours again, like her who is yet ignorant of the quantity of our great delights, and quality of our sweet joys ? Unadvised as thou art, uphold and maintain him by our speeches, whom the heavens and earth can scarce contain with his might. What dost thou know how much our winged Son without resistance doth reign, and command, as much as Phoebus, rising with his golden beams out of the rich Ganges, and plunging in the Hesperian waves with his wearied Chariot, to give some rest to his fainting steeds, and to ease his own labours, seeth in a clear day ? And how he dilateth his signory over

*Venus her
speech to
Fiammetta*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

all that which is shut up between cold Arture and the burning Pole, who is not only a God in heaven amongst other Gods, but is so much more mighty than all the rest that there is not anyone there who hath not been sometimes wounded with his inevit-

*The great
force of
Love* able weapons. With golden and coloured feathers, flying swiftly throughout his kingdoms, in a moment of time he doth

visit them all, and governing his strong bow upon his stretched string, cunningly directeth his arrows, wrought by us and tempered in our holy waters : and when he findeth out someone more worthy and fit for his service than another, he shoots them speedily wheresoever it pleaseth him. He doth stir up and augment in young men cruel and fiery flames, and in tired and old men doth renew their spent and wasted heat, inflaming the chaste breasts of virgins with an unknown and hidden fire, and kindling lively and lovely coals, as well in wives as in widows. He commanded, when he list, the Góds (scorched with his firebrands) to leave the Heavens above, and with counterfeit shapes, and false habits, to sojourn on the earth. Was not Phœbus, who conquered swelling Python, and first tuned the melodious Citterns of Parnassus, many times his vassal, sometimes for foolish Daphne, sometimes for Climene, and sometimes for Leucothoe, and for many more ? Yes, truly. And at the last, hiding his great light under the shape of a poor enamoured Shepherd,

THE FIRST BOOK

kept Admetus his flocks. Jupiter himself, who doth govern the heavens, and controlleth all the Gods, by his compulsion took upon him forms far unbeseeming his omnipotent deity. Sometimes, spreading his wings under the shape of a lily white bird, sounded forth more sweet and pitiful notes than the dying Swans of Meander. And sometimes, transformed into a young and goodly white Bullock, with rude horns on his mighty Godhead, bellowed out, amidst the meadows, fields and plains, his amorous plaints, and deigned not to stoop and prostrate his back to the knees and feet of a silly maid, and so with his enjoyed and sweet prey, with cloven hoofs, instead of cutting oars, his broad and strong breast parting the waves, and making way through the deepest and raging billows, he passed his brothers' kingdoms, who for Semele in his own form, and who for the love of Calysto, turned himself into the likeness of Diana. And to tell of that which in times past he did, metamorphasised into a shower of gold, for the love of fair Danaë, and transformed into other shapes for many more, it would be too long. And the fierce God of War, whose angry and stern countenance, and whose boisterly behaviour, doth make the very Giants afraid, hath tempered his terrible and mortal effects under his power, and was content to become a Lover. And Jupiter, his blacksmith, who never stirreth from his fiery forge, continually beating and

*All these
fables are
touched of
Ovid in his
transforma-
tions*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

framing thunderbolts, hath been also kindled with his fire, and smitten with his golden bolts, which are more mighty and wound more deep than his, though made of hard iron and sturdy steel. And myself likewise (although I am his mother) could not defend myself from his might, whose streams of mourning tears poured forth for sweet Adonis his untimely and cruel death can sufficiently testify. But wherefore do we trouble ourselves with recital of so many examples? There is no deity in Heaven which hath escaped him, but only Diana. And she, delighting herself in woods and hunting, hath fled (nay as some think) rather hid herself from him. But if perhaps (as incredulous) thou dost not allow of this true and tried examples of the Gods, whose mansion places are in the heavens above, and art desirous to know who hath in earth beneath felt the like, so many there are, that I scarcely know where to begin, promising and giving thee to understand, that they were no base, poor or simple men, but the stoutest and most valiant wights that ever lived. And first of all let us behold the most strong and invincible son of Alcmena, who laying aside his dizzy arrows, and casting of his huge and rough Lion's skin, delighted very often to pass his loving times away in framing and fitting Emeralds for his martial fingers, and afterwards to prescribe Laws for his rugged and bushy locks, and by one and one to set them in effeminate and fine order.

THE FIRST BOOK

“ And that mighty hand, with the which he had but erst carried his strong and knotty club, killed great Antheus and beat down and drawn from Pluto his Palace gate the hellish triple-headed Dog, did now draw forth small threads, which he span on Iole her distaff. And those shoulders, on which high heaven was imposed (Atlas changing shoulders with him), were first tenderly pressed, and beclipped of Iole : and afterwards (to please her the more) covered with embroidered garments of fine purple and gold. What amorous Paris did for his sake, what fair Helen, what Clytemnestra, and what Egistus did, all the world doth know too well. And therefore as (as needless also) I omit to speak of Achilles, of Scylla, Ariadne, Leander, Dido, and many more.

“ Believe me (Lady) this is a holy fire, and of great force. Now hast thou (therefore) heard how mighty
Love doth Gods in heavens, and no mean men in
work his earth have been under the sweet yoke of
force even in my princely Son. But what wilt thou say
brute beasts of his force extended in irrational and brute beasts, as well in the air, as in the earth. For him the mournful Turtle Dove doth follow her mate : and our pretty Pigeons, with a marvellous kind of affection, do kiss and bill their loving ones also. And there is not any beast living in the wide earth that can, or doth, at any time escape his gins. The fearful Harts in the Wood, waxing fierce and

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

cruel amongst themselves when he doth wound them with his darts, fighting and braying after their desired and loving Hinds, show bloody signs of this burning heat. The enraged and wild Boars foaming at the mouth with hot and fiery froth, provoked by the instinct and laws of natural love, prepare and whet their tearing tusks, to fight. And the hot Lions of Libia, smitten with love, make all the woody hills and hollow valleys to resound with their roaring outcries. But leaving the woods and champaigns, I say, moreover, that the Gods of the Seas and running Rivers, even in their coldest waters, feel the burning and unquenchable heat of my Son. Nor do I think that it is unknown to thee, what approved testimony Neptunus, Glaucus, Alfeus, and others have given thereof, who were not able to extinguish, no, not so much as to mitigate, these flames with their cold and frozen floods : which although it hath been of everyone long since known in earth, and in the deepest waters, yet penetrating further into the bowels of the earth, it doth violently make open way to the dreadful King of the dark Stygian Lakes. Heaven and earth, therefore, the Sea and Hell have assayed the virtue and force of his arrows. And because thou mayest in few words comprehend everything concerning his mighty strength, I say that all things are subject to nature's lore, and no power is free from it, and that this itself also is under his laws. For if he doth once command, old hatreds and grudges are

THE FIRST BOOK

forgotten, and new angers and ancient rancours give place to his forcible fires.

“ And last of all, his power stretcheth forth so far, that it doth make mothers-in-law become gracious and grateful to their stepchildren, which is no little wonder. What dost thou therefore seek ? What dost thou doubt of ? What dost thou foolishly fly ? If so many divine Gods, so many and so mighty men, and so many fierce and cruel beasts have been conquered of him, wilt thou then think it a shame to be overcome ? Alas, thou knowest not what thou hast to do ? But it may be, in submitting thyself to him thou dost expect some bitter reprehension, and dost (perhaps) fear some shame to ensue thereof, which can by no means fall unto thee, since a thousand more excellent women than thyself, having committed ten thousand greater faults than this, shall sufficiently excuse thee, and, as great presidents of this thy reasonable lapse (if so it be) exempt thee from reproach : who, as thou art not so mighty as they, hast not erred so much as they have done. But if those motives do not alter thy mind, and yet perhaps will obstinately still resist, think that thou canst not join with Jupiter in virtue, with Juno in riches, with Apollo in wisdom, and with me in beauty. And if all we have been overcome, dost thou only think to triumph in thy sole conquest ? Thou art deceived, if thou art of this opinion, and shalt suffer a base foil in thine own proud conceit. Let that

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

suffice thee which heretofore hath been enough, and too much, for heaven and earth, and make not thyself so timorous in saying, 'I have a husband, and holy laws and promised faith forbiddeth me these things,' because they are but vain conceits and frivolous objections against his virtue. For like a strong and mighty Prince he doth plant his eternal laws, when, not caring for other of meaner substance, he doth account them but base and servile rules. Pasiphæ likewise had a husband, and Phedra, and I myself, when I loved. Nay, husbands themselves for the most part love other women, when they have wives of their own, as Jason for example, Hercules and wise Ulysses. No injury therefore is offered unto them, if that they are counterchecked with those laws which they themselves use towards other. No prerogative is granted more to them than to women. Wherefore abandon these foolish and unconstant thoughts, and love securely as thou hast begun. Behold if thou wilt not submit thyself to mighty love, of necessity thou must fly away, and whither wilt thou take thy flight but that he will pursue, and overtake thee? His power is alike in every place, and wheresoever thou goest, and how goest, thou art still in his kingdoms, in the which none can hide themselves no longer than it pleaseth him to suffer them. Let this suffice thee (young Lady) that thou art not molested with such abominable and wicked lust as Mirra, Semiramis, Biblis, Canace and Cleopatra

THE FIRST BOOK

were. My Son shall work in thee no strange and new things. He doth rule by laws as well as other Gods, in following which, thou must persuade thyself that thou art not the first, and shalt not be the last. And if peradventure thou dost believe that thou dost at this present love alone, thy belief is but vain, and false. For to let the other world pass in silence, which is full of them, let us only look into thy noble City, in the which thou hast many brave and infinite companions. And note this withal, that what hath been, and is, done of so many wise and judicious persons, may not justly be thought vain and accounted frivolous. Follow us therefore, and with thankful words and grateful deeds requite our deity for thy peerless beauty, and intermit not to remember her, who hath out of the number of simple and ignorant souls chosen and took thee, to make thee know and participate the pleasure of our gifts."

Alas, good Ladies, what should or could I answer, to such persuasive or forcible reasons alleged by so mighty a Goddess, but only this: "Dispose with me as it pleaseth thee best." I say therefore, that now she held her peace, when I having gathered all her words into the depth of my capacity, and felt them full of infinite excuses, and knowing her also better now (than at the first), resolved with myself to embrace and follow her sweet and pleasing counsels. Wherefore rising quickly out of my bed, and with an humble mind casting my knees on the ground,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

being full of fear, I began softly to say thus unto her :

“ O eternal and singular beauty, O heavenly deity,

*The force of
love is felt
most sens-
ibly and
stronger in
them that
look to
expel it* O only Lady and mistress of my resolute
mind, whose force the more it is resisted,
the more it is felt, pardon my simple and
foolish encounter, which I have made
against the piercing weapons of thy un-
known and puissant Son : and work with

me at thy own pleasure. And stooping to thy will,
guerdon my faith as thou hast promised at fit time
and convenient place, because that others praising thy
effects in me, and wishing themselves the like, the
number of thy subjects may without end increase.”

I had scarcely spoken these words, when, moving
from the place where she stood, she came to me, and
with a fervent kind of affection and merry counten-
ance embracing me, she first kissed my forehead,
and afterwards, as false Ascanius breathing secret
and burning fire into Dido her mouth so she, respir-
ing the like into mine, made my first desires more
hot, and my passions more fervent, as after to the
ruin of my tormented heart I felt them. And open-
ing a little her purple veil, she showed me between
her delicate paps, the lively image of my beloved
gentleman, enfolded in a fine garment, whose sweet
face seemed to be full of many cares, not much unlike
to mine, and said thus : “ Behold, young Lady, thy
loving and loyal gentleman. And we have not given
thee Lista, Gera nor Birria for thy lover, nor one

THE FIRST BOOK

like to any of these. But being most worthy for many brave parts, and a beautiful personage to be beloved of any Goddess, doth love thee (as we have ordained) more than himself, and will continue the same for ever. Wherefore driving all foolish fear away, addict thyself joyfully again to his pure and deserved love. Thy meritorious prayers have with pity penetrated into our ears, and therefore assure thyself that thou shalt without fail according to thy will and works reap no small benefit of them." And thus without speaking any more she vanished suddenly out of my sight.

Alas, poor wretch that I am, could I otherwise think, trying the sequels of her sugared suggestions, and of my ensuing miseries, but that this counterfeit Goddess was rather cruel Ctesiphone than gentle Venus that thus appeared unto me, who laying aside for a while her ugly and hideous hair, no otherwise than Juno the shining glory of her deity, and taking upon her a divine form, as she did an old and crooked shape, represented her before my eyes, as she came to Semele, giving me, as she did also her, sweet counsel mixed with revenge and poison of my final overthrow and helpless fall: receiving which into my miserable breast, was the greatest occasion, and only cause, O godly faith, reverend shame, and most holy chastity, to drive and banish you from the same, from that then chaste (I ween) but now unworthy and spotted breast of mine. But pardon, sweet

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

virtues, pardon me, if due penance of a sinner, and sustained punishment of this guile, may impetrate any remission or favour at all. But now after the Goddess was gone from my sight I remained as one resolute to follow her pleasures. And although this furious passion which I passed troubled my wits, and dulled all my senses, one only spark of all that good, and wisdom, which was lost and gone, kindled (I know not for what desert of mine) a prudent counsel, and knowledge of this true rule in my smothered and consumed heart, which was, that

*To disclosed
love a happy
end is sel-
dom or never
granted* love once discovered doth never or very seldom come to a happy and good end. And therefore amongst other profound

thoughts (although it was hard for me to do) I intended not to prefer will before reason, in bringing such desires to their wished end. And though I was truly by divers intermediate chances greatly constrained, yet so much favour was granted me, that without overcharging the mark, and stoutly enduring the grief, I passed it well away. And yet in truth the forces which I yet have are of sufficient power to uphold and conserve such counsel. Because (although I write most true things) I have in such order set them down, that except he, who doth know them as well as I, being the occasion of them all, no other, were he of never so sharp a wit and ready conceit, could understand and know that it was I. And even him I pray (if this little book

THE FIRST BOOK

chance ever to come to his hands) that, for that love which sometimes he bare me, he would conceal that, which in manifesting it, would not turn to his honour or profit. And if he have taken that love from me without any demerit of my own part, that at the least he would not dispossess me of that honour which (admit that unjustly I have it) he cannot (though he would) render unto me again. Adhering therefore to this determination, and bridling my eager desires, and too to forward in their own discovery, with a strained and impatient rein of sufferance, I endeavoured with all diligence (and at my fittest opportunity) by alluring means, and did practise fine and subtle demonstrances to kindle the young gentleman with those coals, with the which myself was inflamed, and to warn him to be as wary and cunning in his proper affairs, as I was wise and circumspect in my actions.

In bringing which to speedy effect, dangerous delays were not deferred, and thought not my travail in the same, either too long or too great, because if the true testimony of the qualities of the heart is comprised in those which are not different in passions, I quickly perceived, that wished effects did follow my desires: whereupon I saw him not only full of amorous heat, but very wise also and expert in pursuing his amorous enterprises, which things did yield me no small joy and great contentation. With

The condition of the heart is oftentimes comprehended in those which are alike

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

as earnest care therefore and due consideration, tendering my unsuspected honour as also to satisfy his deep desires, when time and place did grant him fit opportunity, he did seriously solicit me, and (as I believe) not without great pain (trying the utmost of his skill) to gain the familiarity of everyone that was nearest allied, and did daily converse with me, but especially, and last of all, to insinuate into the acquaintance of my husband and firmly to purchase his friendship. The which he did not only obtain, but did with such show of great goodwill and favour enjoy it, that there was nothing that might content or please either of them, if mutually and lovingly the same was not made known to each other. I believe (fair Ladies) that without writing it, you may easily know, or at least may imagine, how greatly this pleased me. For what woman is there so foolish, who would not especially conceive as much?

This singular and wished privilege I enjoyed by this happy familiarity, that publicly, and in all companies, I might talk with him, and he discourse with me again. Who, thinking it now high time to proceed to matters of greater effects, sometimes with some other (perceiving that I might both hear and understand him) discoursed of such things, by the which I knew (most willing to learn the principles of this new law), not by his talk only, which he had with others, that he could cunningly

*Not with
words only,
but with
actions and
gestures,
love may be
manifested*

THE FIRST BOOK

and subtly declare his affection, and finely have an answer thereof again, but with divers motions also of his hands, and gestures in his countenance, and body, he could passing well perform the same. And thus with pretty lessons pleasing my willing mind so much, I learned also to be so diligent and wary a scholar, that I would not tell him anything, or he to me again, but by these unsuspected means, whereby equally and justly we conceived our hidden conceits. Nor being yet content with these honest helps, by figurative speeches and invented names he taught me how to speak in open company, to make me thereby more assured of his fervent love, calling me by the name of Fiammetta, and himself Panphilus. Alas, how many times in the presence of myself, and of my dearest friends, being prettily heated with feasting, and love's cates, did he devise (feigning Fiammetta and Panphilus to be Grecians) how I with him, and he with me, were first combined in loving bonds. And afterwards what accidents did ensue of this Grecian love, colouring his forged novel with fit and feigned names. It made me truly many times to laugh, not so much at the gravity and counterfeit modesty in his discourse, as at the simplicity and good meaning of those who gave ear and belief to his tale.

And yet I was sometimes afraid lest that both his disordinate heats might have unadvisedly (perhaps) transported his tongue thither whither it

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

would afterwards have repented that it had runned. But as he was a more prudent and perfect scholar than I took him to be, so did he craftily take heed of speaking of false Latin. O gentle and pitiful Ladies, what doth not love teach his subjects : and whom doth not he enable to learn his wise discourses, and acquaint him with brave and commendable fashions ?

Myself being but a young and simple woman in such pastimes, and scarce able, amongst other
Love a cunning matter gentlewomen my companions, in plain and common things to untie my unperfect tongue, by giving a willing and an affectioned ear to his speeches, did reap thereby so much fruit that in a short time, in feigning and talking, I thought I did excel every famous Poet. For there were few or none of his presupposed positions but with a fictitious and painted tale I would have effectually argued, and fitly answered to the same (a very hard thing in my opinion for a young gentlewoman to learn so soon, and more difficult to tell, or put into practice). But all these shifts would seem but shadows, and of no consequence, if I did write and set down (if present matter should require), with subtle flights I did experiment the faith of one of my most familiar and trusty women, to whom we both purposed to commit the secrecy of our hidden love (not as yet by speeches manifested to anyone), considering with myself, that enclosed in my burning

THE FIRST BOOK

breast it could not be kept there long without great trouble and grief, and perhaps without some violent and sudden issue, unless there were some means and remedies applied to the contrary. It would be besides this a tedious labour to recount what counsel, and how many devices were excogitated between her and me (perhaps in vain and foolish matters) and never put in use, no not so much as imagined of any before. All which, although I have seen them put in trial, to my great prejudice and hindrance, I am not sorry, nevertheless, that I have known them.

If I do not err (Gentlewomen) in my opinion, the great firmness of our young years was very strange to behold, if that with a due and perfect consideration it is well weighed how hard a thing it is for the enamoured minds of two young and raw lovers to continue any long time united together, but that on the one or other side, spurred on with superfluous and overruling desires, they should alter and wander out of reason's course. But the bonds of our loves were so fast knit, and of such rare tenour, that the gravest, wisest and strongest personages in like passages should have got them high and worthy praises. But now my stained pen, with an unbridled and wanton desire, doth prepare itself to write of those final terms of love, beyond the which none can pass further with deed or desire whatsoever.

*With what
difficulty
lovers are
contained
in the bonds
of reason*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

But before I come to this point, as humbly as I may, I implore (gentle Ladies) your pity, and therewithal that amorous force, which, possessing your tender breasts, doth also draw your burning desires to such an end. And pray you moreover, if my speeches seem offensive unto you (I speak not of the deed, because I know that if you have not as yet attained to such felicity, you have in your minds a thousand times wished to have felt the same), that then most prompt you would arise in my excuse and defence. And though seemingly and honest shamefastness too late (alas) entered into my wilful mind, pardon me, most earnestly entreating thee to give place a little while, too timorous young Gentlewomen, because secure and free from thy restraint and menaces, they may read that of me which, in their fervent loves (I know) and hot desires, they also wish might handsomely befall unto them. With hungry hope (therefore) and full of fearful cares, our longing desires, yet lingering delays drew one each day after another, which both of us with painful thoughts did hourly endure, albeit that one did manifest the same in daily meeting, and secret talk together, and the other did show herself in granting of it very coy, and in show repugnant (though against her will) as you yourselves in seeking that (which perhaps most of all doth please your wanton appetites) do know well enough that

*The slack
dealing in
conducting
amorous
desires to
their end is
very bitter*

THE FIRST BOOK

enamoured young gentlewomen are wont to do. He therefore, giving but little credit to my words in these denials, attending fit time and place, more audacious than advised in that which he did, and more fortunate than wise, obtained that of me which I as well as he (though with a feigned face, and a little rigorous resisting to the contrary) did most greedily desire. But if I should for all this affirm, that this was the occasion that made me love him more, I must confess that every time that the remembrance thereof touched my guilty mind it brought with it an incomparable grief. Wherefore let the Gods above (the secret teachers of our hearts) be witnesses with me herein, that this inevitable accident was then, and yet is, the least cause of that great love which I bear him. Albeit not denying, but that this was then, and evermore since, a most sweet, wished, and welcomed delight unto me.

And what simple and slender-witted woman is she who would not wish that thing which she dearly loved to be rather near unto her than far off from her, and by how much she loved and desired it, by so much more to feel the same nearest of all unto her. I say therefore, that after such a quickly passed chance, not fallen in the compass of my belly before, though not seldom times tossed in my thoughts, with exceeding joy and favourable fortune, not once, but many times by means of our proper wits, and new

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

inventions, we recreated ourselves with this manner of dainty disport, although the pleasures of the same is now (alas) lighter than the winds flown from me, unhappy woman. But yet while these pleasant times passed on, as love itself can make true report, and give sole testimony thereof, sometimes his unlawful coming unto me was not without great fear, when by some secret means or other, and at unseasonable times he would be with me : yet how dear was my Chamber unto him, and with what joy, and how willingly did it evermore receive him, whom I did also know to use more reverence in the same than in any holy Temple. Alas, how many pleasant kisses, what infinite number of loving embracements, and how many sweet nights more gracious and dear to us than the lightsome and clearest days, did we pass together without sleep in pleasant devices

and dainty discourses. How many other
Maidenly delights, most dear to every Lover, have
shamefast- we felt in that blessed Chamber in that
ness a most merry prime of our happy days. O most
hard bridle holy shamefastness (a pinching and hard
to wanton bridle to wanton and youthful minds),
and forward
minds

wherefore once again at my request dost thou not depart ? Why dost thou withhold my pen ready to unfold our past joys and pleasures ? Alas, in thinking perhaps to gratify me, thou dost grieve me, and to help me, thou dost hinder me. To those women therefore to whom nature hath granted so large and

THE FIRST BOOK

ample a privilege, that by those things which are spoken they may comprehend and imagine the rest which are concealed to others, not so wise as these, let them be manifest and laid open. Nor let not any call me fool, as ignorant of so much, in knowing well enough, that it should have been more honestly for me to have concealed, than to manifest that which is already written. But who can countermand Love, when, with working all his might and force, he doth oppose himself? At this point many times I let my pen fall out of my hands, and as often again (molested by him) I took it up, and put it to his former task.

And finally like a subject and bond woman I must needs serve him, whom (when I was free in the beginning) I knew not how to resist. He showed me that hidden delights and privy pleasures were as much worth again as hoarded Jewels and secret treasures. But wherefore do I feed and please my humour about these words? I say, that then I thanked infinite times the holy Goddess, the promiser, and performer, of these sweet joys. Oh, how many times crowned with her green leaves did I visit her sacred Temples, offering up sweet incense to her divine Altars, and how often did I condemn the old Nurse, and her simple counsel: and did besides this (rejoicing and glorying in myself above all other enamoured young Gentlewomen

*Delights
which are
hidden are
as much
worth as
buried
treasure*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and Ladies, that I knew and kept company with) scorn and laugh at their ridiculous and appassioned loves, blaming that in my speeches which was dearest to my soul, saying many times to myself: "There is no woman beloved so as I am, nor any Lady, be she never so noble and fair, that doth love so brave, so wise, and so worthy a young Gentleman as I do, nor that doth with so great delight and pleasure reap such amorous fruit in a paradise of all joy, nor in so great abundance, as I most happily and hourly do taste."

And to be short, in respect of this, I esteemed the whole world as a trifle of no account, and thought that I reached the highest heavens with my thrice happy head, and wanting (as I thought) nothing else to attain to the highest top of felicity, and to the full accomplishment of all my pleasures and sweet contents, but only to have had the occasion of all my blissful joy and blessed fortune manifested, and made openly known to the world, thinking with myself, that that which delighted me so much should (as myself) have pleased everyone alike. But thou, O bashfulness, on the one side, and thou, fear, on the other, you have (I say) withheld me, the one threatening me eternal infamy, and the other, the loss of that, of which indeed envious fortune did afterwards miserably despoil me.

Thus therefore I passed this golden and gladsome time many days and months (as it pleased Love)

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

without emulating any loving Lady or enamoured Gentlewoman, loving most happily, and living most joyfully in a world of sweet content, and swimming with full sails in Seas of heavenly felicities, and of all manner of delights, not entertaining so much as a thought of discontent and sorrow, and never imagining that these pleasures, which then my merry heart was so amply and thoroughly possessed of, should be the root and plant (in time to come) of my miserable woes, and woeful miseries, which at this present, without any hope or remedy at all to my hapless pain and endless grief, too well I know, and most sensibly feel.

THE SECOND BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA



WHILST that, O dearest Ladies, I spent my merry days in so pleasant and jocund a life, as is above written, never thinking of future chances, cruel fortune did secretly prepare her malicious poison for me, and with continual courage (myself not suspecting anything) did at an inch pursue my joyful life. And thinking that (in making me become a vassal to love, and in my chiefest time of joy and liberty), she was not well appaid, but perceiving how this my sweet servitude did yield me great delight, she endeavoured with a more stinging nettle to torment and prick my poor and silly soul. And her appointed time being now come, she tempered (as after you shall perceive) her bitter galls and wormwood for my unwilling and feeble stomach: which (maugre my teeth) compelling me to drink, turned my present mirth into sudden sadness, and my wonted laughter into woeful lamentations: which things not only enduring, but yet thinking it my duty in writing them, to show them to some others, I took such compassion of myself, that taking almost all my force from me, and bringing infinite

THE SECOND BOOK

tears to mine eyes, it did hardly permit me anything effectually to execute my purpose herein : which, albeit I may very ill do, yet will I forcibly go about to perform the same.

After that he and I (the weather falling out very cold and rainy) were in my Chamber together, reposing and solacing ourselves upon a sumptuous and sweet bed, and Lady Citherea wearied, nay almost overcome, the dark and silent night with her long tariance favourably granted to our pleasant and desired sports fit opportunity of time and place. And a great light hanging in the midst of the Chamber gluttred his eyes and mine (viewing each other's beauty) with exceeding joy : of which, while I recreated my mind in gazing and discoursing of his, mine eyes did drink a superfluous kind of sweetness, which making their lights inebriated (as it were) with the same, with deceitful sleep (I know not how) a little while oppressed, and my words (interrupted also in the midst) remained locked up close in their lids.

Which pleasant and sweet slumber, passing so mildly away from me, as it came, my ears by chance heard certain doleful mutterings and sorrowful bewailings uttered forth by my best beloved. Wherefore suddenly troubled in mind, and my thoughts, at war within themselves for his welfare, made me almost interrupt him with these words : " Sweet heart, what dost thou ail ? " But countermanded by new counsel I kept them in, and with a sharp eye

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and subtle ears, secretly beholding him turned now on the other side of the bed, I listened a good while to his sorrowful and silent words, but mine ears did not apprehend any of them, albeit I might perceive him molested with great store of lamentable sobs and sighs, that he cast forth, and by seeing also his breast bedewed all with tears.

What words (alas) can sufficiently express with how many cares my poor soul all this while (being ignorant of the cause) was afflicted? A thousand thoughts in one moment did violently run up and down in my doubtful mind, meeting all at the last, and concluding in one thing, which was, that he, loving some other Woman, remained with me here, and in this sort against his will.

My words were very often at the brink of my mouth, to examine the cause of his grief, but doubting lest he lamenting in this sort, and being suddenly espied and interrupted of me, he might not be greatly abashed thereat, they retired back, and went down again: and oftentimes likewise I turned away mine eyes from beholding him, because lest the hot tears distilling from them, and falling upon him, might have given him occasion and matter to know that I perceived his woeful plight. Oh, how many impatient means did I imagine to practise, because that he (awaking me) might conjecture that I had neither heard his sighs, nor seen his tears: and yet agreed to none at all.

THE SECOND BOOK

But overcome at the last with eager desire to know the occasion of his complaint, because he should turn him towards me, as those who, in their deepest sleep, terrified by dreaming of some great fall, wild beast, or of some ghastly thing, give a sudden start, and in most fearful wise rouse up themselves, affrighted out of their sleep and wits at once, even so with a sudden and timorous voice I shrieked, and lifting up myself, I violently cast one of my arms over his shoulders. And truly my deceit deceived me not, because (closely wiping away his tears) with infinite (though counterfeit) joy he quickly turned towards me again, and with a pitiful voice said :

“ My fairest and sweetest soul, of what wert thou afraid ? ” Whom without delay I answered thus : “ My Love, I thought I had lost thee.” My words (alas) I know not by what spirit uttered forth, were most true presagers and foretellers of my future loss, as now too true I find it.

But he replied : “ O dearest dear, not hateful death, nor any adverse chance of unstable Fortune whatsoever, can work such operations in my firm breast, that thou (my only joy) shalt leese me for ever.” And incontinently a great and profound sigh followed these pitiful words, the cause of which not so soon demanded of me (who was also most desirous to know the offspring of his first lamentations) but suddenly two streams of tears from both his eyes (as from two fountains) began to gush out amain,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and in great abundance to drench his sorrowful breast, not yet thoroughly dried up by his former weeping. And holding me, poor soul (plunged in a gulf of griefs, and overcome with floods of brinish tears), a long time in a doleful and doubtful suspense, before (even so did the violence of his sobs and sighs stop the passage of his words) he could answer anything to my demands again.

But after that he felt the tempest of his outrageous passion somewhat calmed, with a sorrowful voice, yet still interrupted with many heavy sighs, he said thus again: "O dearest Lady and sole Mistress of my afflicted heart, and only beloved of me above all other women in the world, as these extraordinary effects are true records of the same: if my complaints deserve any credit at all, thou mayst then believe, that my eyes not without a grievous occasion shed erst such plenty of bitter tears, whensoever that is objected to my memory, which (remaining now with thee in great joy) doth cruelly torment my heart to think of, that is when I remember with myself that thou mayest not (alas, fain would I that thou couldest) make two Panphilowes of me, because remaining here, and being also there, whither urgent and necessary affairs do perforce compel me (most unwillingly) to retire, I might at one time fulfil the laws of love, and my pitiful, natural and dutiful devoyre: O my aged and loving father. Being therefore not able to suffer any more, my pensive heart,

THE SECOND BOOK

with remembrance of it, is continually with great affliction galled more and more, as one whom, pity drawing on the one side, is taken out of thy arms, and on the other side with great force of love is still retained in them.”

These words pierced my miserable heart with such extreme bitterness as I never felt before. And although my dused wits did not well understand them, notwithstanding (as much as my ears and senses attentive to their harms did receive and conceive of them) by so much more, the very same, converted into tears, issued out of my eyes, leaving behind them their cruel and malicious effects in my heart. This was therefore (good Ladies) the first hour in the which I felt such grudging griefs envious of my pleasures : this was the hour which made me pour forth innumerable tears, the like never spent of me before, whose course and main streams not any of his comforts and consolatory words could stop and stanch one whit. But after I had a long time together remained in woeful wailings, enfolding him lovingly between my arms, I prayed him (as much as I could) to tell me more clearly what pity, and what due piety that was, that did draw him out of my arms, and threaten me his absence ; whereupon, not ceasing to lament, he said thus unto me :

“ Inevitable death, the final end of all things, of many other sons hath left me sole to survive with my

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

aged and reverend father, who burdened with many years, and living without the sweet company of his deceased wife, and loving brothers, who might in his old years carefully comfort him, and remaining now without any hope of any more issue, being determined not to marry, doth recall me home to see him, as the chiefest part of his consolation, whom he hath not seen these many years past. For shifting of which journey (because I would not, sweet Fiammetta, leave thee) there are not a few months past, when first by divers means I began to frame some just and reasonable excuse. But he in fine, not accepting of any, did not cease to conjure me, by the essence which I had by him, and by my impotent childhood tenderly brought up, and nurtured in his lap, by that love, which continually he had borne me, and by the duty and that love, which I should bear him again, and by that requisite obedience which every child should bear unto his father, and by all other things that he thought most effectual and persuasive, did like a familiar friend (whose part is rather to command) pray me, that, to commiserate his aged and declining years, and to tender his welfare, I would with speed return to visit him. And besides this, with solemn oaths, and serious observations, he caused all his friends, and agents in these parts, and with most earnest entreaties provoked them incessantly, to prick me on in this behalf, saying, that if he did not see me shortly with him, his miserable

THE SECOND BOOK

soul would utterly forsake his old and comfortless body. But (alas) how strong and forcible are the laws of nature! I could not presently assent, *The laws of nature are most strong* nor yet can scarce resolve with myself, that, by reason of the great love I bear thee, these piteous exorations should take place in me. Whereupon having with thy good leave determined to go see him, and for his great comfort to remain some short space of time with him, and not knowing also, how I could live without thee, all these (I say), occurring and accumulated in my sorrowful memory, do make me every hour (sweet Lady) most justly and sorrowfully complain." And thus he held his peace.

If there was ever any of you (fair Ladies) that in her most fervent and jealous love had ever had so hard and bitter a Pill as this, even she I think doth know with what incomparable grief my mind (nourished long since with food of his love, and set on fire with unspeakable flames of my own) was then afflicted: but others, free from such amorous passions, could not conceive, because as allegations of extravagant examples, so all my speeches besides would not be sufficient to induce them to believe the *The force of an amorous passion* same. In brief therefore I say, that hearing these words, my soul did seek to leap out of my body, and it had (I think) flown away, if between his arms whom most of all I loved, it had not been straitly embraced, and forcibly retained.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

But all the parts of my body remaining nevertheless full of shaking fear, and my heart puffed with swelling grief, and weltering in the passions of these agonies, they bereaved me a pretty while of my speech. But afterwards, by quantity of time made more pliable to sustain these never-felt sorrows and unwonted pains, a certain feeble and fearful force was restored to my daunted spirits. And my eyes, whose conduits, stopped by the violence of this unexpected accident, did now burst out into great plenty of tears, and the strings of my tongue, contracted together with sharp sorrow, were now dissolved to utter and breathe out the confused anguish and conceived sorrows in my mind. Wherefore turning me to the Guardian and Lord of my life, embracing him, I said thus :

“ O final hope, and sovereign comfort of my afflicted soul : let these my pitiful words take place with force in thy fleeting mind, divert thee from thy new purpose, because if thou dost so dearly love me as thou showest, thy life and mine, before their natural and prefixed period cometh, may not jointly be deprived of this joyful and sweet light. Haled on by dutiful pity, and drawn back again by zealous love, thou puttest all thy future fortunes in doubtful hazard. But certes, if all thy words are true with which thou hast not once but many times heretofore affirmed that thou didst love me, no other pity therefore than this should be more mighty, and of

THE SECOND BOOK

greater force to resist, nor (while I live) to withdraw thee to any other place. And hearken why. It is not unknown to thee, if thou followest that course which thou seemest to do, in what a doubtful and miserable estate thou leavest my poor life, which heretofore hath hardly passed one day not without great sorrow when I could not see thee. Then mayest thou by this be more ascertained, that when thou dost omit to visit me so long together, all my joys will utterly forsake me, and this (alas) would be too much. But who doth not doubt that all kinds of woes, sorrow and anxieties will assail me, and succeed in their place, which (without any resistance that I can possibly make) will perhaps dissolve my vital powers into nothing. Thou shouldest have already known how weak and impotent young women are to reback such cruel and adverse occurrences, and what feeble force they have, with a strong and resolute mind to endure them. If peradventure thou wilt object and say, that in the first beginning of my loves, I have both wisely and stoutly suffered greater adversities than these, I will truly agree with thee herein, but the occasions of them and of these are divers. My hope placed in my own valour made that seem light unto me which, now being put in another his will, will be too heavy for me to support. Who did ever deny me, when burning desire had beyond all measure kindled my breast, and surcharged it with furious passions,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

that being enamoured of thee, as thou wert also of me, I might not enjoy thee ? Truly nobody. Which comfort (when thou art so far sequestered from me) will not so easily fall to my lot. Besides this, I enjoyed no more then, but the sight of thy sweet face and goodly personage, and knew thee no more but by the outward figure, lineaments and proportion of thy body, although in my heart I made great account and prize of thee, but now have by good proof perceived, and felt indeed, that as thou art now to be esteemed a great deal dearer of me than the reach of my imagination could then extend unto, even so art thou become mine own with that assured sureness, and those indissoluble bonds, with which true lovers may possibly be held and united to those that love them again. And who doth not

*It is a
greater grief
to leave a
certainty
for an un-
certainty*

doubt, moreover, that it is a greater grief to lose that, which one hath to hold, than that, which he hopeth to have, although his hope therein be not afterwards frustrate. Wherefore considering this matter well, I plainly see my death will soon approach. Shall therefore the love of thy old father be preferred before that great affection which thou oughtest to have of me, and be the ominous occasion of my untimely death ?

“ And if thou dost so, thou art certes no lover, but an open enemy. Ah, wilt thou make more account of those few years reserved for the miseries of thy

THE SECOND BOOK

old father, than of these many, which by great reason and likelihood I have (living joyfully with thee) to spend. Alas, what indiscreet folly were this ! Dost thou believe that anyone conjoined to thee in parentage, nearest in blood, or most firm in mutual friendship, doth love thee so much as I do ? If this be thy belief (believe me, Panphilus) it is erroneous. For truly none can love thee better, and hold thee *He that doth* (sweet Panphilus) dearer than I do. If *love most* therefore I love thee more than others, I *deserveth* serve then to be requited with greater love *most pity* and pity than others. Prefer me therefore worthily before the rest, and being pitiful towards me, forget all other pity, that might offend and prejudicate this, and let thy old father, as he hath lived a long time without thee, enjoy (a God's name) his wonted rest without thy company. And let him from henceforth (if so he please) live amongst the rest of his other friends and allies : and if not, let him die. If it be true (as I have heard) he hath a good while since escaped the deadly stroke of death, and hath lived longer here than was convenient for his necessary health, and if he live in pain and with much trouble (as commonly old men do) thou shalt in thy absence show thyself more pitiful towards him, to let him die, than with thy presence to prolong his troubled and tired life. But thou oughtest rather to succour me, poor soul, whose life hath not been, a good while since, but by thy sweet company pre-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

served, nor cannot tell how, without the same, to enjoy this mundane light, and who, being yet in the prime of my tender age, doth hope to live and lead with thee many joyful months and years together. If thy journey were to such purpose, and could

*Medea her
medica-
ments re-
stored to old
Æson his
youth again*

work such supernatural effects in thy old father his body as the charms of Medea and her medicinal spells did upon old Æson, then would I say, that by just piety thou wert instiged, and would highly commend this requisite pity, and although it would seem repugnant to my will, yet would I wish and allow of this devotion in thee, and exhort thee to the performance of it.

“ But such a miracle, passing the laws and bounds of nature, can never come to pass, according to thy natural reason, as thou knowest well enough. Behold then if perhaps thou showest thyself more cruel and rigorous to me (than I believe or imagine thou wilt) or dost so little care for me, whom on thy own mere choice, and not by compulsion, thou hast loved, and yet dost, that above my love, thou wilt for all this advance the lost and helpless charity of the old man, take some pity at the least of thy own estate, and caring little for him, and bemoaning me less, rue thy own condition, whom (if first thy countenance and afterwards thy words have not deceived me) I have seen to be more dead than alive, as even now thou wert (without perceiving me, that

THE SECOND BOOK

did mark thee) by some uncouth accident, is a most extreme and sorrowful passion, and deprived once of my sight, and debarred of my company, *By long grief and sorrow men die* dost thou believe to live so long time, as this pitiless pity doth require. Alas, for the love thou bearest to the Gods, look better to thyself, and see what likelihood of death (if by long and lingering grief men die, as I see it daily by others) this journey (ah, this inopinate and unlucky journey) will yield thee: which, how hard moreover and unpleasant it is to thee, thy sorrowful sobs and tears, and the unwonted mourning of thy heart, which panting and beating up and down in thy breast I feel, do plainly show. And if not apparent death (which is most like), a worser and more cruel condition of life than any death (be assured) will accompany thee. Alas that my enamoured heart, urged with great pity that it hath of my own distress, and constrained by that tender compassion which I feel for thee, must now play the humble suppliant, to pray and entreat thee, and to advise thee also, that thou wouldest not be so fond (what kind of pity soever moving thee thereunto) as with evident and imminent danger to hazard thy safe person.

“Why, think that those who do not love themselves possess nothing in the wide world. Thy father, of whom (forsooth) thou art so pitiful, did not give thee to the world because thou shouldest be thy own

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

minister and occasion of taking thyself away out of it again. And who doth not believe but that if our

*Who loseth
not himself
possesseth
nothing in
this world* estate were as manifest, or could be lawfully told unto him, that he (being wise and of mature judgment and experience) would rather say : ‘Stay there still.’ And

if discretion and reason would not, pity at the least would induce him to it, and this (I am assured) thou knowest well enough. It is therefore great reason, that what judgment in his own tried cause he hath given, he should (and is most likely) that he would in our cause (if he knew it) give also the very same. Wherefore omit this troublesome journey, unprofitable to thee, unpleasant to me, and prejudicial to us both. As these (my dearest Lord) are reasons forcible enough (if followed) to keep thee from going hence, so are there many more not a little effectual (if put in practice) to dehort thee from going hence, as first for example, considering the place whither thou goest. For put case thou dost bend thy journey thither where thou wert born, thy native soil and natural country, and a place beloved more of thee than any other (as I have heard thee say), in certain things annoyous, and for certain causes hated of thee. Because thy City (as thou thyself hast told) is full of haughty and boasting words, but more replenished with pusillanimous and unperformed deeds. And that they are not only slaves to a thousand confused laws but to as many

THE SECOND BOOK

different opinions as there are men. All which (as well foreigners as Citizens), naturally contentious and full of garboyles, do daily rage in civil broils, and intestine wars. And as it is full of proud, covetous and malicious people, so is it not unfurnished of innumerable and intricate cares, the least of which is (I know) most contrary to the good disposition of thy quiet mind.

“But this noble City which thou dost intend to forsake (I am sure) thou art not ignorant, *Naples* with what joyful peace it doth continually flourish, how famous it is for plenty of all commodities, how opulent, shining in glory and magnificence, and how heroically administered, *It is sometimes lawful to praise oneself* under the sole regiment of a mighty and invincible king. All which things, I know (if ever thy appetite I have known) are most pleasant to thy dainty taste. And besides all these rehearsed pleasures, here am I (here am I, Panphilus), whom thou shalt neither find there nor mayst live with in any other place. Leave off therefore thy sorrowful determination, and, changing thy unadvised counsel into better consideration, have regard (I pray thee, by tarrying here still) to the comfort and weal of both our lives.”

My words increased his tears in great abundance, of the which, with intermingled and sweet kisses, I drunk up some. But after many a heavy sigh, that he fetched, he answered me thus again :

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

“O chiefest and singular felicity of my soul, I (doubtless) know thy words to be most true, as by every manifest danger included in them, thou hast plainly set down before my eyes.

“But because (since present and urgent necessity doth require, which I would it did not) I may briefly answer thee, I tell thee, that to pay and acquit with a short grief, a long and great debt, I think (my Fiammetta) thou wilt easily grant that I may and must justly do. Thou must therefore think, and rest assured, that (although I am sufficiently by the pity of my sick and aged Father duly obliged) yet am I no less (nay rather more straitly) bound by the same, which I ought to have of us both, which, if it were lawful to discover, it would of itself seem excusable enough, presupposing that what thou hast said should be judged of my Father, or of any other else for him, I would then leave and let my old Father die, without seeing him at all. But since it behoveth that this pity must be covert and kept close, and accomplished, also, without manifesting the cause of it, I see not how, without great infamy and reprehension, I might anyway desist to perform the same.

“To avoid which due slander in not discharge of my duty, frowning Fortune shall but three or four months at the most interrupt and suspend our wonted delights, which no sooner expired, but without all fail thou shalt see me joyfully return to thee

THE SECOND BOOK

again, and make both our hearts as glad at our merry meeting, as they are now dolefully daunted with their sorrowful parting. And if the place to which I go is so unpleasant as thou makest it (and as it is indeed compared with this, thy sweet self being here) then this must greatly content thee, thinking, that if there were no other occasion, that should provoke me to depart from thence, the qualities of the place, most contrary to the disposition of my mind, would be forcible motives to make me return and come hither again. Grant me therefore (sweet Mistress) this favour, that I may go thither, and as thou hast been-heretofore most careful of my estate and honour, so now likewise tender the same, and arm thy mind with patience in this cross of frightful Fortune, because knowing this accident to be most grievous unto thee, I may hereafter make myself more assured, that in any chance of Fortune whatsoever, my honour is as dear to thee as myself."

He had now said, and held his peace when I began thus to rejoin as followeth: "Now do I clearly see that which framed in thy inflexible mind thou dost bear inexorable. And I scarcely think that in *Things that are wont to hurt a lover's mind* the same thou dost admit any thought at all of those great and infinite cares with which thou leavest my distressed soul so heavily burdened, dividing thyself from me, which not one day, night nor hour can possibly live here

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

without a thousand fears. And I shall remain in continual doubt of thy life, which (I pray the Gods) may be prolonged above my days, to thine own will and desire. Alas, what need I with superfluous
Dangers that hang daily over mortal men speech prolong the time in discoursing and reciting of them by one and one, thyself knowing well enough, that the Sea hath not so many sands, nor heaven so many stars, as there be doubtful and dangerous perils that are imminent, and commonly incident, to mortal men? All the which (if thou goest from hence) as doubtless they will not a little fear me, so will they greatly offend and hurt thee. Woe is me for my sorrowful life, I am ashamed to tell thee that, which now cometh to my mind: but because by the which I have heard it seemeth a thing possible and likely, constrained therefore I will tell it thee. Now if in thy country, in the which (as the common fame is, and as myself particularly have heard) there is an infinite number of fair and dainty Ladies, who spending their young years in cunning love, and solemn sports and feasts (the first a passion especially incident to them, and the second a common thing used there), with wanton and alluring means are most expert to entice and procure love again, thy wandering eye should espy some one of these, which might perhaps please thy absent heart, and so for her love shouldest neglect and forget mine, ah, what a miserable life should I then lead!

THE SECOND BOOK

Wherefore if thou dost bear me such fervent affection (as thou sayest and seemest to do) imagine how thou wouldest take it, if for exchange of another (which thing shall never come to pass) I should deny thee (Panphilus) my love : but before my true heart should harbour one treacherous thought thereof, these hands of mine should rent it from my breast, and be the executioners of my just death.

“ But let us leave these imaginations, and that which we desire may never happen let us not with ominous augury divinate, and tempt the Gods in vain. But if thy mind be resolutely bent to depart, and forasmuch as there is nothing that can please me which may anyways displease and discontent thee, I must of necessity dispose myself to be agreeable to thy will herein. Notwithstanding, with earnest prayers I request thee, that it would please thee in one thing to follow my mind, in delaying (I mean) yet a little longer (if possibly it may be) thy sudden and sorrowful journey, during which time, imagining in the meantime thy departure, and with continual thinking thereof, presupposing thy absence, I may, with less grief of mind, learn and frame myself to live without thee : which is no strange thing for me to request, nor hard for thee to grant, since that the weather, which for this time of the year is most unreasonable, doth greatly incline to the help and favour of this my desire, and is most contrary to the drift of thy determination.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

“Why, dost not thou see how the skies, full of dark and black clouds, with tempests, storms and floods of pouring rain, and Hills of thick snows choking up the ways, with raging and boisterous winds, and horrible thunders, do daily threaten the earth and earthly creatures with manifest dangers.

“And (as thou canst not otherwise know) how every little River and Brook is now by these continual showers of rain swelled into dangerous and mighty floods. What senseless man then is he (pardon me, good Panphilus) who (having so small regard of his life) would in this blustering, stormy and ill weather take any voyage or journey in hand? Do therefore my pleasure in this reasonable advice, which if thou wilt not do, then tender thy own safety, and do the duty which thou owest to thy own self herein. Let these lowering and doubtful times pass on, and stay for calmer wind and weather to travel at thine ease, and with less danger. And myself in the meanwhile (accustomed by little and little, and inured to pensive and sorrowful thoughts) will with more patience attend thy joyful return.”

To these words he deferred not his answer but said: “The tormenting pains, and variety of painful cares, in the which (O dearest Mistress), against my will, content and pleasure, I leave thee, and those which unfeignedly I carry with me in mine own breast, let the comfortable hope of my speedy

THE SECOND BOOK

return assuage and mitigate. Nor is it (pardon me, sweet Lady) a point of wisdom to busy thy thoughts about that (death, I mean) which may as well prevent me here, as surprise in another place, when my destinies must needs yield to their time, and to her stroke. Nor to conjecture and prognosticate of those accidents possible perhaps to annoy me as more likely to be prosperous unto me. Where and whensoever the wrath of the Gods or their favour doth light upon one, even there and then, without vain resistance, must he be content to suffer good or ill. Refer therefore all these things to their disposition, with never thinking or once looking after them, who knowing our necessities can provide better for us than we ourselves: desiring thee to apply thy mind rather, and employ thy whole cogitations, in humble supplications and requests to them (the gracious Gods, I mean), that they may have a prosperous and happy event. But that I ever become Lover to any woman than to thee (Fiammetta), to whose loyal and everlasting service I religiously dedicate my heart and with oath bind myself, Great Jove himself (yea, though I would myself) with all his might can never bring to pass, for with so strong and sure a chain, Love hath linked my heart to thine, sweet affection hath made my soul subject to the signory, and deep desire hath bound me for ever to thy dispositions. And assure thyself of this besides. That the earth

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

shall first bring forth glittering Stars, and the heaven (ploughed with Oxen) shall bring forth ripe corn, before Panphilus shall or will in anything transgress the laws of thy peerless love, or entertain any other woman into the closet of his constant heart. The delay of my departure into my Country, which thou dost request of me, if I knew it could any ways avail thee, or be profitable unto me, I would more willingly perform than thou dost require. But since the daily deferring of it is an hourly augmentation of our sorrows, and in departing now, I should return again before the time of my long tariance here should be (according perhaps to thy mind) fully finished, I think it therefore a great deal better to hasten my journey. Which space of time thou dost also crave to learn (as thou sayest) supposed sorrows, wherein thou dost simply deceive thyself, considering that in this meantime thou shouldst have (myself not being here) that selfsame grief so forcible and extreme, which at my departure indeed, and in my unfeigned absence thou wouldest conceive. And as for the foulness of the weather, I will use (as other times I have been accustomed to do) a good and wholesome remedy, which I would (the Gods granted) that I had now occasion to practise returning from thence again, as in departing from hence I know to work well enough. And therefore with a cheerful and strong mind (my loving Fiammetta) dispose thyself to this, which (when thou

THE SECOND BOOK

must do) thou mayest better pass away in doing it on a sudden, than with successive fear and lingering sorrow expect every hour when to begin it."

My tears (at the end of his persuasion somewhat relented) attending some other answer, and hearing this sorrowful discourse, did redouble their falling drops. Wherefore laying my heavy head upon his breast I stayed a good while without speaking any more unto him, and revolving many things in my mind, I could not assent to his consolatory persuasions nor dissent from his alleged assertions. For (alas) who would have answered otherwise to his words but thus: "Do that which pleaseth thee best, and come quickly again." Truly I believe none. But not without great grief and effusion of many tears, after a long while I gave him that answer, telling him, moreover, that undoubtedly it should be a great wonder to find me alive at his return. After I had spoken these words, one comforting up the other, we wiped and dried up each other's tears, and for that night did defer them till some other time.

And he (keeping his old custom) came to see me many times, which were but a few days (alas) before his departure, much changed in habit, and more (as it seemed) altered in mind, from that, since first he saw me. But that woeful night (ah, that black and thrice cruel night) being come, which was the beginning of all my annoys, and the last conclusion of all

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

my joys, with divers and sundry discourses, but not without great anguish of mind, grievous wailings, and Seas of tears, and of sorrowful sobs and

sighs on both sides, we passed soon away.

The description of the day Which (although for that time of the year was very long) yet to me it seemed the

shortest night in all my lifetime. And now the open day (the menacing enemy, and divider of Lovers) began to overcome the light of the stars, the sign of which (coming on very fast after it) appeared to my eyes, embracing him most straitly I said thus :

“ O the sweetest Lord of my life, what cruel one is he, that doth take thee from me ? What angry God is that, which with so great force doth wreak his ire on me, that while I live it may be said Panphilus is not there where his Fiammetta is ? Woe is me therefore, poor soul, that knowest not whither thou goest now, that live desolate, and destitute of thy company. When will that happy time come when once again I shall between my stretched arms enfold this lovely and sweet body ? Alas, I fear me never. And as I know not, so am I not able to express that, which my miserable heart divining, went up and down, saying and lamenting in this sorrowful sort.” But oftentimes, recomforted of him again, I kissed him infinite times. And after many loving embracements, both of us very loath to rise, yet at the last, the encroaching light of the new day

THE SECOND BOOK

compelling us, unwillingly we did forsake the receptacle and secret testimony of our delights. And he preparing now to give me his last kisses, and farewells, with plenteous tears I first began to utter these words: "Behold, my only love, thou goest, and in short time dost promise thy return. Wherefore assure me thy faith hereof (if so it please thee), so that expecting the same (not accounting for all that thy bare words as vain) I may have of thy future firmness some lively hope and pledged comfort."

Then he intermingling his tears with mine, and hanging about my neck, wearied I think with heavy grief of mind, with a feeble voice said thus again: "By illuminate Apollo (sweet Lady), I swear unto thee, who with most swift pace coming into our hemisphere (contrary to our desires) doth minister a sorrowful occasion of our sudden departure, and whose golden beams I do attend for my glad-some guides: and by that indissoluble love, which I bear thee, and by that due and forced piety which doth divide me from thee, that four months shall not fully pass but (if the Gods be gracious to me herein) thou shalt see me here returned to thee again." And then, taking my right hand in his, he turned himself to that side where he saw the Images of our Gods hanging and said: "O most holy Gods, coequal and just governors of Heaven and earth, be present witnesses of this my faithful promise, and of my inviolable given faith.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

And be thou also present (O mighty Love) the secret knower of all these things.

“And thou most stately Chamber, more pleasant to me than the heavens and divine habitacles to the Gods, as thou hast been a secret witness of our desires, so likewise keep these words enclosed in thy Walls, in the least of which if (by my own fault) I do fail, let the just indignation of the angry Gods be such towards me, as Ceres her ire was (in times past) towards Erisichthone, as Diana’s scorn was wreaked upon gazing Acteon, or such as jealous Juno’s envy appeared towards simple believing Semele.”

And when he had so said, with a zealous affection and earnest desire he embraced me, and with a feeble and interrupted voice he gave me his last *A dio*.

After he had thus taken his leave, overcome, poor wretch, with extreme anguish of mind, and woeful wailings, I could scarce answer him anything again, but yet at the last by plain and main force, I did fetch these trembling words out of my sad and heavy mind: “Thy assured faith solemnly promised to me, and sincerely given by thy right hand to mine, let Jupiter confirm in heaven with the effect, as Isis did the prayers of Teleteuse, and make it so perfect and entire in earth, as I do effectually desire, and as thou dost with sacred oath require.” And accompanying him to my Palace Gate, and opening my lips to bid him farewell, suddenly my words

THE SECOND BOOK

were taken from my tongue, and the light of heaven from mine eyes. And like a ruddy vermilion Rose
The effect of an enamoured woman cut down with scythe in open fields, feeling the parching and contracting heat of the Sunbeams, doth fall down amongst the green leaves, and losing by little and little his former colour, doth die: so half alive and dead I fell between my Maiden's arms, and not a little while after, by her diligent care and help, who was most faithful unto me, with cold liquors (recalled back again to this sorrowful world) I did begin to feel the recovery of my former strength and forces. And hoping that he was yet at the gate, like a fierce Bull, having received a mortal wound, furiously rouseth himself, running and leaping here and there, so I amazed and lifting up my dimmed eyes, which had scarcely yet received their perfect sight, ran eagerly upon my Maid with open arms to embrace her, thinking to have clasped my Panphilus between them, and with a faint and hoarse voice, broken as it were in a thousand pieces with incessant weeping and wailing, I said: "O my soul, farewell." The maid held her peace seeing my error. But afterwards having the full feeling of my senses, and perceiving indeed that I was deceived, I hardly kept myself from falling the second time into the like trance. It was now clear day in every place, when seeing myself in my chamber without my Panphilus, and looking round about me, and being

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

ignorant (almost) and astonished for a great while how this might come to pass, I asked my waiting-maid what was become of him, and the poor soul with lamenting answered : " It is a good while since, Madame, that he bringing you hither in his arms, the bright day stealing on, hath by force
The curiosity of lovers (and not without infinite tears) separated and taken him from you." To whom I said again : " And is therefore gone ? " " Alas, good Madame, yea," said she. And yet consequently I asked her again : " With what kind of countenance did he depart ? " " With the most sober, saddest and most sorrowful look " (said she) " and like one who had the picture of grief, care and anguish lively depainted in his demiss visage." Afterwards I followed and asked her what kind of gesture he did use, and what words he did speak, when he went away. And she answered : " You being, good Lady, half dead between my arms, and your soul wandering (I know not where), he got you quickly and softly into his arms, as soon as he saw you in so strange a plight, and searching up and down with his hand in every place, if your fainting soul was yet contained in your appalled body, and finding your heart panting, and beating strongly against your tender sides, bewailing and complaining, a thousand times and more, with the secret virtue (I think) of his last kisses he called you back again. But when he saw you still immovable, and as cold yet as the

THE SECOND BOOK

marble stone, he brought you hither, and doubting of some worse mishap, weeping oftentimes, he kissed your pale visage, saying: 'O ye high Gods, if there be any harm committed and caused by my departure, let your just doom light upon me and not upon the faultless Lady: reduce her vagrant soul into her proper place again, so that of this last joy that doth remain (that is to see me at my last departure, and to give her last ambrosial kisses, with her angelical voice once again saying farewell), we may receive a little comfort.' But after that he perceived no feeling in you, as one devoid of counsel in this cause, and ignorant what to do, laying you softly on the bed, and like the surging waves of the Sea (tossed up and down with stormy winds) wallow and rush violently sometimes forward, and immediately with as much force totter back again, even so he suddenly, flinging from you to the chamber door, espied through the windows the threatening lightsome air (enemy to his abode) with hasty speed to come on. And coming running from thence to you suddenly again, and still calling and crying on you, rejoining as many sweet kisses, as raining bitter tears upon your fair and fainting face. But when he had done so many times together, and seeing that his stay with you could be no longer, embracing you, he said: 'O sweetest Lady and only hope of my heavy heart, whom now (of force departing from thee) I leave in doubtful

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

state of life, the pitiful Gods restore to thee again thy lost comfort, and preserve thee so long in life, that we may see ourselves once again joyful and merry together, as now (deprived of all consolation) this bitter departing doth divide us asunder.' And all the while he spake these words, he did so extremely lament, that the vehement sobs and sighs, that seemed to cleave the heavens, and his loud complaints, did oftentimes strike a great fear into me, lest that they had been not heard of those only in our house, but of our next neighbours also.

"And not permitted now to tarry any longer, by reason of the clear brightness of the day that more and more came creeping on, with greater abundance of tears than before, he said: 'Ah, my sweet heart, farewell.' And drawn away as it were by force, hitting his foot a great blow against the threshold of the door, he went out of our house.

"From whence being gone (S.T.) he said, looking back, meaning that he could scarce go forwards, and still looking back at every step, thinking that when you came to yourself again, I should call him back again to you." She now held her peace.

And I (good Ladies) as you may imagine, sorrowing and lamenting for the departure of my dear lover, remained the most comfortless and distressed woman, bewailing with continual tears his sudden and unfortunate absence.

THE THIRD BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA



As you have heard (gentle Ladies) before, even in such sort (my Panphilus being gone) did I remain, and with many tears not a few days after I woefully bewailed his sorrowful departure. And there was not anything else in my mouth (although I spake it softly to myself) than: "O my Panphilus, how may it be that thou hast forsaken me?" This name truly, when I remembered the sweet accents of it, amongst my many bitter tears, did yield me no small *Fond thoughts of lovers* comfort. There was no part of my chamber which I did not with a most desirous eye behold, saying to myself: "Here did my Panphilus sit, here did he lie, here did I kiss him." And in brief, every place in the same, by representing such sweet objects to my memory, was most dear unto me. Sometimes I feigned with myself, thinking, that (returned back again) he came to see me, and, as if he had been indeed, I looked towards the chamber door, and perceiving myself deluded with my vain fancy, I was angry with myself, knowing that I was deceived indeed. And because I would drive away vain cogitations, I remembered that

THE THIRD BOOK

oftentimes I began to busy myself about many things, but overcome of new imaginations, and leaving the same undone, my miserable heart with an unaccustomed beating did begin to molest me. I called to my mind many things which I would at his departure have said unto him, and repeating also many times with myself those words which we had to each other spoken. And in this manner, not setting my mind firmly on anything, I lived many days together a most sorrowful and pensive life. But after that this great grief (conceived by his departure) by length of time was somewhat alleviated, more forcible and violent thoughts began to enter into my mind, and, being lodged there, did with probable and apparent reasons keep and defend themselves there. And not many days after, remaining all alone in my chamber, it came to pass that I began to say to myself :

“ Behold my lover is gone, and is going on his weary way, and thou, poor soul, couldest not at his departure once say farewell, nor pray the Gods to be his guides, nor kiss his troubled countenance, no, not so much as see him : which things if he keep
Lovers in mind, and if any infortunious accident
oftentimes (which the Gods forbid) happen unto him,
blame and conjecturing some ominous sign by thy
excuse them- silence, may greatly (perchance) blame thee
selves again for it.” This thought troubled my mind very much at the first, but a new counsel and conceit of other

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

matters removed it again from me, because among my sundry thoughts, I said with myself: "I ought not to incur any blame herein, because he, being endued with great wisdom, will sooner expound my sudden ecstasy for a lucky presage, saying: 'She said not farewell, which is commonly wont to be said to them who mean to absent themselves for a great while, when they depart, or else utterly to take their leave,' but holding my peace, he will rather think with himself that it was a sign whereby to note that short time assigned for his stay there."

And recomforting myself again with this flattering imagination, I let it pass, and entered into other new and divers thoughts. And being thus beset with sorrow on every side, I remained all alone, my heart being wholly pensive for him, walking sometimes up and down in my solitary chamber, sitting down now in this place, and now standing in a muse in that, and other sometimes leaning my heavy head upon my hand against my bedside, I said to myself: "O that my Panphilus were come hither now again!" And then from these fancies I passed into other new conceits. As sometimes (for example) with great grief I called to mind how with smiting his foot against the threshold of the door he went out of my chamber, as my trusty waiting-woman had told me. And remembering also that Laodameia did gather no greater token of Protesilaus his long absence, and unperformed return, by no other sign

THE THIRD BOOK

than by this, it made me many times fall into great and ruthful considerations thereof, fearing lest the selfsame thing (which the Gods grant not) might as unfortunately befall to me. But not conceiving yet, in the depth of my mind, what should happen unto me indeed, I let these, as vain and frivolous imaginations, pass away, which did never the sooner at my will and pleasure depart, but when others coming afresh in their places, then did these forsake my melancholy mind.

And recounting those now in my mind, that were come, which were so many and so great, that to think of their number only (if of nothing else) it was no small pain to my poor heart, for I did not once remember (amongst my other thoughts) that I had read in Ovid his verses that troubles, cares and painful affairs did drive love out of young and tender minds, but rather, so often, when I remembered that he was on his way. And thinking, that these were no small annoyances unto everyone, and especially to him, whom I knew had been ever accustomed to rest, and acquainted with ease, and now most of all, when he was constrained to them against his will.

Wherefore I did first greatly doubt with myself lest the smallest of these griefs might not have been means forcible enough to have taken him from me, and feared again, lest his unwonted travails, and the hurtful and unseasonable weather, might

*Troubles
and cares
are wont to
extinguish
love in
young men*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

have been an occasion of sickness, or of some worse mischance, that might have hindered his designs, and so hurt my desires. And in this doleful imagination (I remember) my mind was no longer busied than in any other, although that I did oftentimes argue, by the induction of his unfeigned tears, which I did see trickle down his cheeks, and of my painful troubles, which never changed my firmness, that it could not be a true conclusion, that for so little grief, so great love should be extinct, hoping also, that his young age (mastered with singular discretion and wisdom) would defend and keep him from any other hurtful accident.

Thus therefore, in opposing, answering and dissolving my own objections, I spent so many days, that I did not only think that he was now arrived in his country, but I was also certified thereof by his letters, which for many causes were most welcome and acceptable unto me : in the which he certified me, that with greater flames of affection he burned more in my love than ever he did, and with stronger promises did revive my hope of his return. Wherefore my first thoughts being gone, from this hour forward, new fancies did quickly arise in their places.

For sometimes I said : "Now my Panphilus, the only beloved son of his old father, who many years before had not seen him, received of him with great joy, feasted of all his kinsfolks, and dearly entertained of all his friends, doth not only forget

THE THIRD BOOK

me, but doth (I think) accurse the months, days and hours in the which, with divers occasions heretofore, my love hath stayed him here. And *They that love are always in suspicion* honourably welcomed of all his compeers, and with joyful congratulation of all Ladies and Gentlewomen, doth blame me (perhaps) who knew not how to feed his dainty fancies in anything else than in simple unfolding my secret love, and the strange effects of my new affections unto him, when he was here. And minds full of mirth and jollity are apt to be drawn from one place, and to be bound to another, according to the mutability of their pleased and displeased fancies. But (alas) may it now be, that I should lose him in this sort.

“Truly I cannot hardly think it. The Gods forbid that this should come to pass: and grant that as amongst my parents, and kinsfolks, and in my own and native City, they have made and kept me only his, so amongst his kindred, and in his natural country, let them vouchsafe to preserve him only mine.”

Alas, with how many salt tears were these words mingled, and with how many more should they have been, if I had believed that that which they themselves did truly prognosticate should afterwards have proved true: albeit that those, which then came not forth, I have afterwards in treble-fold spent all in vain. Besides such speeches, my mind (divining oftentimes of her woes to come) surprised (I know

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

not with what fear), did greatly tremble and quake, which fear was most commonly resolved into these stinging thoughts, and words :

“ Panphilus, abiding now joyfully in his City, full of most famous and excellent temples, and by reason of most solemn and high feasts, with exceeding pomp and glory celebrated there, doth with great pleasure visit them : where he cannot choose but find many fair and noble women, which, as in surpassing beauty, gallant behaviour and good graces they excel all others, so most of them being skilful practitioners in their enticing art, with subtle snares and amorous allectives are passing cunning to entrap young and gentle minds, thereby to draw them to their liking, and so to lure them to their love. Alas, who can then be so strong a guardian of himself, where so many motives do concur, but must (maugre his beard) at some time or other by plain force be overtaken : as I myself, not many months sithence, by like powers also assailed, may be an approved and hapless president of such strange and strong virtues, which in my simple breast prevailed. And besides this, new things are wont to delight more than old. It is therefore but an easy matter, that he (being newly arrived, and a stranger) may please them, and they him again.”

Alas, how grievous was this imagination to me, the which that it should not come to pass, I could scarce drive out of my mind, saying thus : “How

THE THIRD BOOK

may Panphilus, who loveth thee more than himself, receive into that heart, enclosed in thine, any other new love ? Why, dost not thou know, that there is here perhaps some brave Lady well worthy of his love, who with greater force than with that of her eyes hath oft assayed and endeavoured to enter into his heart, but could not find any way whereby, he being yet scarce thine, as now he is, so many more Goddesses also of beauty passing up and down in this City, and yet not any one of them able to move his mind ? How canst thou then think that he may be so soon enamoured as thou sayst ? And besides this, dost thou believe, that he would violate that troth, which so religiously he avowed unto thee, for any other faith ? It may never be, and therefore thou must trust to his fidelity, and rely upon his good discretion. With great reason thou oughtest to think that he is not so meanly wise, but that he knoweth, well enough, that it is but mere folly to leave that, which already he hath, to get that, which he hath not, yea, if that which he would forsake were but a small thing, and of great deal less account, in respect of that which he seeketh to attain, being of greater estimation and value. And of this also thou must have an infallible hope, that this cannot so easily come to pass : because if the great fame and general report of thy beauty be true, which thyself hast often heard, thou mayest (placed amongst the number of the bravest Ladies in his Country, and to the fairest

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

of them all paragoned) be prized above the best, which hath not in it any one richer, braver or more nobly born than thyself. And besides this, whom can he find amongst all the Gentlewomen in his City, that would, nay that could, love him so dearly as thou dost.

“Again, he is not ignorant (as one expert in amorous affairs) how hard a labour, and intricate a matter it is, so to dispose and work with any woman, to make her like at the first, or at the first assaults to make her yield to love. And although he did not love thee at all, yet being troubled about many affairs of his Father, and occupied with his proper business, he could not now be at vacant leisure to acquaint himself with other new women. Wherefore let not this only fall into thy thought, but hold it for an infallible Maxim, that as much as thou lovest, so much thou art beloved again.” Alas, how falsely and sophistically were these arguments coined against the truth. But with all my disputing, I could never refel and put out of my mind the obscure and miserable jealousy entered into it for advantage, and accomplishment of my other griefs. But yet somewhat lightened (as if I had argued truly), and eased a little thereby, I did to my feeble power remove such injurious thoughts from my mind. O dearest Ladies, because I will not spend the time in recounting every one of my uncouth thoughts, what were my most careful deeds you shall now hear. At the strangeness

THE THIRD BOOK

of which marvel not, since I must needs follow, not those which I would, but such as it pleased Love to give me, ah, those was I constrained to perform. Very few mornings escaped me when, risen out of my weary bed, I went not up to the highest turrets of my Palace, and from thence no otherwise than the Mariners, climbing up to the top (of their main Mast, do pry on every side, to see if they can espy any dangerous Rocks, or ken any land that is near, which may hinder their continued course), I first looked about me on every side. And afterwards, fastening mine eyes steadfastly towards the East, I did mark how much the Sun, elevated above the Horizon, had spent of the new day, and the more I saw it higher, the more I said (to myself) that the term of Panphilus his return drew on, and many times I did with great delight, as it were, see it rise and come forth, and discerning sometimes my own shadow, by the ascended quantity of it in the Merediall line, made less and less, and sometimes looking to the space of his body, made bigger by the earth in his setting, I said with myself, that he went more slowly than ever he did before, and did lengthen the days more in Capricorn than he was wont to do in Cancer, and so likewise, mounted up to the middle circle, I said that there he stayed too long to delight himself in overlooking the wide earth. And although he glided down swiftly towards the west, yet methought he was too long in his course again, whose

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

light after that our Hemisphere had lost, and that the twinkling stars had full scope to show forth theirs, thus partly contented, I went numbering
Lovers and calling to mind many times with myself
mark their the days that were past, and with little
days with stones did mark those with other days
stones also that were to come, no otherwise than in times past (dividing their merry and happy days from their sorrowful and dismal times with little black and white stones) were wont to do. Oh, how many times do I now remember, that before their due time I did put a stone there, thinking that so much of the prescribed term should be diminished how much the sooner I adjoined it to that which was already past, sometimes counting the little stones assigned for the days past, and sometimes telling those which stood for those days which were yet to come, although I kept the number of every one of them very well in my mind (thinking every time to have found some of them increased, and that the other should have been diminished). So did my eager hot desire transport me to the wished end of the prefixed term. Using therefore these vain cares, I returned many times to my desolate chamber, more desirous to be there all alone, than willingly in any company. And when I was alone, to drive away sorrowful cogitations, I opened a certain casket of mine, out of the which I took many things (sometimes his favours bestowed on me) by one and one, and the delight and great

THE THIRD BOOK

desire which once I had in beholding him I did now take in gazing upon them, which when I had seen, scarce able to contain my swelling tears, yet fetching great sighs, I kissed them, and as if they had been rational creatures, and things of understanding, I did ask them saying, "When will your M. be here?" and laying them up again, I drew forth many of his letters which he had foretimes sent me, and reading almost every one of them over, and imagining that I did talk with him, I felt no little comfort. I called oftentimes my faithful and secret maid unto me, with whom I had much and divers communication touching him, sometimes asking her what her hope was of his return, and sometimes what she thought of him, or if at any time she had heard anything of him.

To all which demands, either to please me, or else according to her opinion, answering the truth, it was a great comfort to my desolate mind. And thus many times I passed away the greater part of the day with less grief and sadness. I took no less

*Variety of
talk doth
diminish
sorrow and
sadness* pleasure and content (than in the foresaid things) to visit the holy Temples, and to sit at my Palace Gate with other Gentlewomen of my acquaintance, where oftentimes with sundry discourses my infinite cares were somewhat removed from me. To which places sometimes resorting, it fell out often, that I saw divers of those young Gentlemen whom I did know to keep Panphilus company: and whensoever I

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

espied them, I did never forget to look amongst them, if happily I might see Panphilus with them, as sometimes I did. Oh, how oftentimes was I vainly deluded with this foolish imagination. And although I was thus deceived, yet it did me much good to see them, whom (as by their pitiful countenances they bewrayed as much) I saw full of like compassion, that I had in seeing themselves alone (as it were) and deprived of their sweet companion, and who (methought) seemed not half so merry as they were wont to be.

Ah, what a great desire had I many times to ask them what was become of their gentle friend and associate, if reason and modesty had not counter-checked my eager will herein. But Fortune truly was sometimes favourable to me herein, because in talking of him in suchlike places, and thinking that I did not hear and understand them, they said that his return was almost at hand : and how sweet these words were to mine ears it were a bootless labour to express. In this sort therefore, and with such sundry thoughts and superstitious deeds, and with many other like these, I did study to pass the tedious days away, which were so irksome to me in their length, desiring therefore still for night, not because of both I thought of it more profitable or comfortable for me, but because when it was come there was the more time spent, and the less to pass away. After that the cumbersome day therefore (whose long

THE THIRD BOOK

hours being finished) gave place to silent night, fresh fancies and new cares came also in company with the same. And I, who from my cradle being naturally given to be afraid in the solitary darkness of night, accompanied now with mighty love, was free from all manners of fear. And perceiving everyone in my house to take their quiet rest, sometimes I went up alone to that place where I had not long since seen the Sun rising in the morning, and as Arontes did speculate the celestial bodies, and their orbicular motions, between the white Marbles in the hills of Lucca, so did I (the night creeping on with overlong minutes, and feeling the great cares and careful thoughts to be enemies unto my wished sleep) behold the Heavens from that place, and the swift revolutions of them, imagining with myself that they were wonderful slow in their course: and sometimes turning mine eyes steadfastly towards the horned Moon (having recourse to her wane, and to her roundness), I perceived, by the increase and decrease of it, some nights to be longer and shorter than other. And so much the more my desire was made more fervent, by how much sooner I wished, that the four months by her sweet course had been brought to an end. Oh, how many times (although it lent a dimmed and obscure light) did I behold it a great while together with great delight, imagining that my Panphilus his eyes were then fixed on it as well as mine. Whom for all

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

that I do not now doubt that (I being now quite out of his memory) he did not once care to look on the Moon, but not having so much as a thought thereof, he did rather at that time of the night take his rest in his bed.

And I remember, that aggrieved at the slowness of her course, with divers sounds (following the old and ancient errors of those many years ago)
Lovers who expect the return of their beloved think every hour to be longer than other I helped her forwards in her slow course, to grow to her full roundness, to the which after that it was come, contented with her perfect and full light, she cared not (as it seemed) to diminish the same again, and to return to her new horns, but to remain still in her round form, albeit with myself I held her excused for the same, esteeming her abode more favourable and gracious with her joyful Mother than desirous to return to the dark kingdoms of her infernal Husband. But I remember well, that the devout petitions and earnest prayers, which many times I offered up unto her, to accelerate her easy and slow pace, I turned now into threatening speeches, saying :

“ O Phœbe, an evil rewarder of the devout service done unto thee, with pitiful prayers I labour to lessen thy travel and weary journey, but thou, not esteeming them, with long and slow tariance (injurious to thyself and to me) dost not care to increase mine. And therefore if, to the necessity of

THE THIRD BOOK

my help, thou dost not return more bicorned, thou shalt then perceive me as slow in thy honours and sacrifices, which I mean to offer up unto thee, as now I find thee careless and slack in thy duty to the world. Why, dost not thou know, that the sooner thou shalt four times horned, and as many times round, have showed thy lights to mortal creatures, by so much the sooner my Panphilus shall return to me again: who being once come back, then as slow or as swift as thou wilt thou mayest run out thy compass and circles."

Truly that selfsame madness which did induce me to make such prayers, that very same did so bereave me of myself that it made me sometimes think that she (afraid of my threatenings) made greater haste in her course only for my pleasure: and other times, seeming not to care for me, to be more slow than she was before. This often beholding on her, made me so skilful in her nature and course that, when she was in her wane, or in any part of heaven, or conjoined with any star, I might have fully judged and known how much of the night had passed away, and how much was to come.

Both the Bears likewise (if she had not appeared) did by long experience make me very skilful and certain thereof. Alas, who would have believed that love could have taught me such Astrology, a science more fit for finest wits, and profound judgments, and not for a troubled mind occupied with his fury.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

When the heavens, full of darkest clouds and overrun with boisterous and tempestuous winds, and choked with misty fogs, did from this place take my sight away, sometimes (if I had no other matters to busy myself withal) calling my waiting-maids and Gentlewomen together in my Chamber, I did myself tell and (to please my strange humour) willed them also to recount divers tales, the which the more they were elonged from the truth (as for the most part such kind of people are wont to tell) so much the more (methought) they had greater force to drive away sighs, and to make me merry, who gave diligent care unto them, so that sometimes, notwithstanding my melancholy fits, I laughed apace at them. And if perhaps such feigned jests and invented tales could not (as true matters) be

*To have
company
in misery
doth make
the grief
the lighter* justly set down in divers fabulous Books, yet in searching out of other's mysteries by them, and applying these with mine, and perceiving myself to have company in my sorrows, I passed the time away with less grief. Neither do I know which of these was most gracious unto me, to see the nights passed away and spent, or else (my mind busied about other things) to see the days run on and spent.

But after that the foresaid operations, and many other devices, had occupied my senses for a good while, I went, enforcing myself (as it were) to sleep, although I knew it was but in vain, and therefore

THE THIRD BOOK

went rather to lie down to sleep. And being all alone in my bed, and troubled with no rumours and noise, all those thoughts almost, which in the daytime had sursaulted me, came now afresh to my mind, and in despite of myself made me, with many more arguments pro and con, to repeat them against myself.

And I would many times have entered into others, which thing (alas) was not so easily granted unto me, but yet sometimes by very force leaving them, and lying on that side where sometimes my Panphilus was wont to lie, which place reserving yet (as it were) a sweet savour and scent of his body, methought my drowsy senses therewith revived, and, my mind greatly contented, I did call him softly with myself, and (as though he had heard me indeed) I did sweetly pray him that he would return quickly again. I did after imagine
Divers thoughts of lovers that he was come again, and feigning many frivolous things with myself, by one and one methought I did tell them unto him, and he demanding many of me again, I did answer again in his place : and sometimes it happened that carried away with such foolish thoughts I fell at last asleep, which was sometimes more pleasant and more welcome to me than any watching and waking, because when I was awake I did falsely suppose these imaginations with myself.

But this, if it had endured but any small time,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

did make them appear no otherwise to my fancies than if they had been true indeed. Sometimes

*Dreams
represent
many times
those things
which are
beloved* methought he was returned, and that in most fair Gardens (free from all suspicion and fear) decked with green leaves, sweet flowers, and divers kinds of pleasant fruits, I sported and played with him as

other times we did accustom to do. And there, I holding him by the hand, and he me, unfolding his fortunes good and bad, and telling all his accidents unto me, methought that many times before he had perfectly told out his tale, with often kissing I did interrupt him in his delightful discourses. And as if the same had been true indeed (which but with feigned eyes I did contemplate) I said : “ And is it true (sweet Panphilus) that thou art returned again ? Certes it is. For here I have thee.”

And then I kissed him again. Methought that other times with great solace I was walking with him up and down the sea banks. And sometimes my imagination was so strong herein that I did affirm it with myself, saying : “ Well now I do not dream that I have him between my arms.” Oh, how it grieved me when it came to pass that my pleasant dreams and sweet sleep were both ended, which (going away) did continually carry that away with them which, without any trouble or grief to him, I must needs confess did oppress me. And although that I remained in great melancholy by remembering of

THE THIRD BOOK

them, living nevertheless all the next day in good hope, I was somewhat content and eased, desiring still that night would quickly draw on, because I might in my sleep enjoy that, which waking I could not attain to. And although my sleep did sometimes yield me such needy favours, notwithstanding it did not permit me to receive such dreams of pleasure mingled without much bitter and poisoned gall of sorrow, because many times (methought) I saw him apparelled with ragged and forlorn garments, besmeared all over (I know not) with what foul and black spots, and very pale and fearful, as though he had been pursued of some cruel enemy, with shrieks and outcries calling to me: "Help me, O my Fiammetta, help me!" Other times (methought) I heard divers talk and mutter of his death.

And sometimes these fantasies of horror pierced so far into my mind that (methought) I saw him lie dead before me: and in many other uncouth and pitiful forms, so that it never came to pass that my sleep was of more force or greater than my grief. Wherefore suddenly awaked, and knowing the vanity of my dream, as one contented yet but to have dreamed these terrors and terrible dangers, I thanked the Gods, remaining yet somewhat troubled in mind, and fearing that the things which I had seen, if not in all, in part at least they

*Things seen
in dreams
are some-
times true
or else
figures
of true
things*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

had been true, or else figures of true things to come. Neither I was content at any time or persuaded by the contrariety of these (although I said with myself, and heard of others, that dreams were but vain) until I did hear some news of him, of the which I began now carefully and warily to inquire after. And in such sort (as you have heard, fair Ladies) I passed away the tedious days and irksome nights, attending one still after other in their long course. But the truth is that, the time of his promised return approaching, I deemed it the best and safest counsel to live merely in the meantime: by which means my beauty (a little altered and decayed by reason of this long unacquainted grief) might return again into her proper place, because at his arrival I might not seem ill favoured and not gracious in his sight, and so might not (perhaps) please his dainty and curious eyes.

Which was not hard for me to do, because being, since his departure, accustomed and well acquainted with sorrows, it made me endure and pass them away with very little trouble or no pain at all. And besides this, the near hope of his promised return made me every day feel a little more joy, and content of mind. Wherefore I began to frequent the feasts again, not a little while before intermitted of me, ascribing the occasion thereof to my obscured and cloudy days; perceiving now the clear and new times to be at hand.

THE THIRD BOOK

Nor no sooner did my mind (contracted erst with most bitter and pinching griefs) begin to dilate and enlarge itself in such a pleasant and joyful life, but I became fairer than ever I was before. And I trimmed up my gorgeous and rich vestures, and made my precious ornaments fairer, no otherwise than a valiant Knight at arms doth clear and make bright his Complete Harness, challenged to some worthy and famous combat, because I might seem more stately and bravely attired with them at his return, the which (as after it fell out) in vain I did attend. As then therefore these actions were changed into another tenour, so did my thoughts also change their copy.

It came never now into my mind that I could not see him when he departed, nor the remembrance of the sorrowful sign of his smitten foot
Vain thoughts of lovers against the door, nor any thought of stinging and envious jealousy, nor his sustained troubles, nor my suffered toils, nor his dangers, nor my dolours did now molest my peace, but rather days next before the end of his promised return I said to myself: "Now it doth grieve my Panphilus to be long from me, and perceiving his time near, according to his promise, doth make short preparation and haste for his speedy return. And now perhaps, having left his old father, he is on his way."

Oh, how pleasant were these words unto me, and how often did I most sweetly descant upon this note,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

thinking many times with myself, with what kind of most loving entertainment, gracious gesture, and sweet and friendly shows, I might at the first represent myself unto his person, and welcome him. Alas how many times said I to myself :

“ At his return he shall be more than a thousand times embraced of me, and my zealous kisses shall be multiplied in such store that they shall not suffer one right and perfect word to come out of his mouth, and I will make restitution of them a hundred times redoubled, which at his departure (without receiving on his part any again) he gave to my pale and half-dead visage.” And in these kind of thoughts I doubted many times with myself that I could not bridle that burning and fervent desire that I should then have, at the first sight of him, to embrace him, if I did (perhaps) see him in open and public company.

But the ungentle Gods (as you shall hereafter perceive) found out a sorrowful means, which persuaded no fear, doubt or mistrust of the due performance of any such circumstances, and ceremonies, denying me the chiefest thing indeed. Remaining therefore continually in my chamber, and as often as anybody came into the same, so often did I believe that they were come to bring me tidings that he was coming, or else to tell me that he was already arrived, I never heard any talk in any public and private place, but with open and attentive ears I noted it

THE THIRD BOOK

well, thinking that either they did, or else should speak of his return.

And sitting in my chamber I rose (I think) a thousand times out of my place to run to the window, & though I had been busied about something else and looking from thence afar off, and beneath also at the door (driven on by the suggestion of a foolish conceit, and fond belief of his being near), I said :

“ Is it possible, Fiammetta, that Panphilus being now returned doth come to see thee ? ” And afterwards, finding my mind illuded, confounded with myself, I went to my place again. And saying, that at his return he should bring certain things to my husband, I did oftentimes ask, and caused many to inquire, if he was arrived, or when his friends in these parts did look for him. But receiving no joyful answer of my diligent and careful inquiries, but only such an one as of him that should never come any more (as afterwards indeed he did not), caused me to live in a most sorrowful and solitary plight. Wherefore wrapped (most pitiful Ladies) in these cares, as you have heard, I came not only to the greatly desired and (with infinite pain) expected term, but I passed it, also many days after, in great and grievous woes. And uncertain with myself whether I should blame him or not, my hope began by little and little to relent.

Wherefore I partly left off my former and pleasant imaginations, into the which (giving perhaps my

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

mind too great a scope) I had entered too far. And new thoughts now (the old being gone) began to toss and turmoil my soul afresh, and holding my mind (in divers doubts and perplexities) to know what was the occasion of his tariance longer than he promised, I began to excogitate many things care-

*They feel
incredible
passions
who, after
the end of
their pro-
mised time,
see not the
return of
their beloved* fully with myself. And before many other doubts that were objected to my mind, I found many things so ready in his excuse, and many more than he himself (if he had been here) could have perhaps alleged. Sometimes I said: "O Fiammetta, what

reason doth make thee think that thy Panphilus doth stay without returning to thee but because he cannot: divers sudden changes and unexpected affairs do many times hinder forward men in their determinations, and do quite dissolve their designments. Nor is it possible to prescribe so precise a time to future things as many unwisely believe. And who doth doubt also that present, near, ancient and dutiful piety doth not bind more than that which is absent, strange, new and but mere voluntary? I know it very certain, that he loveth me most of all, and doth now think of my sorrowful life, and hath no small compassion of my pains. And pricked on by force of love is many times in hand and most willing to set forwards, and to come unto me. But the old dotard (his injurious father) with his tears (perhaps) and prayers, hath

THE THIRD BOOK

somewhat more prolonged his appointed time, and, opposing his commandments to his forward will, hath retained him still there. Wherefore as soon as fit opportunity is answerable to his desirous mind, he will come to me again."

But after these speeches and friendly excuses, my thronging thoughts did drive me on farther to imagine more strange, unlucky and more grievous occurrences. Sometimes I said:

"Who can tell, if he, more wilful (than his due love required) to see me again, and too precise to come just at the end of his appointed month, laying aside the great pity of his aged father, and neglecting all other business, hath embarked himself in some slender vessel, not attending the calms of the tempestuous waves (and crediting too much deceitful and lying Mariners, who for their gains are too adventurous and desperate of their own lives, and too prodigal of those of their passengers, and having committed himself to the rage of the merciless winds, and surging waves of the dangerous Seas) is perhaps drowned and perished in them. Unfortunate Leander by no other occasion and lamentable means than these was taken from his hapless Hero. Again who knoweth if, constrained by his froward fates, and fortune, he is thrown upon some uninhabitable and desert rock, and, escaping danger and death by water, in exchange of that hath gotten a worse by famine or ravening fowls, or else left upon any rock

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

by forgetfulness (as Achimenes was) doth in vain attend that some should come, or by chance touch by, to fetch him from thence. For who is ignorant how full of deceits the lawless seas are ?

“For it may be also that he is taken by enemies, or with gins by wicked Pirates bound fast and kept in prison. All which perils, as they are common, so do we daily see them come to pass.” But on the other side afterwards it came to my mind that his journey was more safe by land, yet I did imagine likewise of a thousand sinistrous chances that might hinder and stay him as well that way. Wherefore judging that he might (when such inopinate and unlucky hazards of fortune came suddenly and soonest objected to my mind) find the more just and better excuse (as he did allege the greater and worser dangers) sometimes I said :

“Behold the Sun, hotter than it was wont to be, doth dissolve the huge hills of Snow congealed in the middle region of the Air, whereupon *The effect of the Sun in the Spring-time* with furious and flowing stream they came pouring down into the plains, of the which he hath not a few to pass over. Wherefore if now, with more audacious rashness than advised reason, he hath adventured to pass over them, and with his horse is fallen into any of them, and stifled there amongst them hath miserably lost his life, why, how can he then come ? Floods have not learned of late, neither is it a strange thing to them, with these

THE THIRD BOOK

injuries to molest travellers, and cruelly to swallow up unawares those that pass over them. But if he hath happily escaped these unhappy dangers, he may be perchance fallen into the hands of some pitiless thieves, and (despoiled of all that he hath) is perforce kept, and without hope of redemption stayed of them.

“ Or else peradventure may be overtaken by some malady in the way, where now he abideth for the recovery of his health, and after he is well again will without fail come joyfully to us.” While these careful imaginations occupied thus my perplexed mind, a little cold sweat did overrun all my body, and I was so greatly afraid of the event of these uncertain dangers, and so strongly persuaded of their truth, that I turned my break-brain thoughts into pitiful prayers to the divine powers, that they would take the same from me, apprehending them so forcibly in my mind, and no more nor less, than if before mine eyes, I had seen his imminent danger, and instant death. And sometimes I remember that with firm belief I bewailed his woeful end, as if I had seen any of these intellectual adversities indeed.

But afterwards I said to myself: “ Alas, what strange causes are these which my miserable thoughts cast before my eyes. The Gods forbid that any such may befall. Let him stay still, and as long as pleaseth him, and let him rather (than to content me, or to offer himself to any dangerous

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

jeopardy, which may chance indeed, though now they do but delude my troubled wits) not return, nor see me at all.

“ All which perils (though they are indeed possible) yet are they impossible to be kept close, being most like that the untimely and violent death of so noble and famous a young Gentleman as he is cannot long be hidden, and concealed, especially from me, of whose estate and welfare I do carefully cause, and with secret and subtle investigations do continually procure, diligent inquiry to be made.

“ And who doth doubt moreover if that any of these supposed perils were true, but that flying
Fame a Fame, the swift reporter of ill news, would
swift re- have long since brought the manner of his
porter of all death hither? By means of which fortune
ill things (but my least friend in this) would have given me an
open way to have made me the most sad and most
sorrowful woman that might me.

“ Wherefore I rather believe, that he remaineth in as great grief as I am in, if that his most willing return is forbidden only by the heavy commandments of his father, and therefore he will come quickly or else, excusing his staying so long, will for my great comfort write to me the occasion thereof.”

Truly (the foresaid thoughts) although they did fiercely assault me, yet were they easily enough overcome, and the hope, which by the term determined was enforced to fly from me, with all my

THE THIRD BOOK

power I did retain, laying down before it the long and fervent love which he bare unto me, and I to him, his pawned faith, the adjured and sacred Gods, and his infinite tears, in which things I did affirm and think it impossible that any deceit or guile might be hidden. But yet I could not so rule my sorrowful mind, but that this hope, thus forcibly kept, must needs give place to many vagrant and vain thoughts, that were yet left behind, which, driving hereby little and little out of my woeful breast, did work amain to return to their former places, reducing oftsoons to my mind divers prodigious signs and tokens, and many other unfortunate accidents. And I did scarcely perceive, the peaceable hope being almost quite expelled out of my heart, but I did immediately feel their mighty and new forces planted in her place. But amongst all other murdering thoughts that did most of all massacre my grievous soul (hearing nothing at all in process of many days of my Panphilus his return) was sharp and stinging jealousy. Ah, this spitefully galled and wounded my breast more than I was able to endure. This did disannul all excuses (which I had made for him), as knowing and consenting to the occasion of his absent deeds. This did oftentimes induce me to those speeches condemned of me before, saying :

“Alas, how art thou so foolish to believe that either the love of his father, urgent affairs or delightful pleasures may now keep Panphilus from coming

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

hither, if he did love thee so as once he said he did?
Dost not thou know that Love doth overcome all
Love doth things, for he hath (fervently (perhaps)
overcome enamoured of some other Gentlewoman)
all things quite forgotten thee, whose pleasures, being as forcible as new, do hide and hold him there, as sometimes thine did keep him here.

“Those foresaid Ladies, passing gracious in everything they do, and (as thou saidst) in every point most apt to love, and with brave allurements endeavouring to be beloved again (he himself being likewise, by the delicate pureness of his clear complexion, naturally inclined to feel such passions, and for many rare and commendable qualities in him most worthy to be beloved), applying their whole studies to his service, their pains to his pleasures, and he his desires to their devotions, have made him become a new Innamorato. Art thou so assotted with the fame and glory of thine own beauty that thou dost not believe that other Women have shining eyes in their heads, fairness in their faces, and that they are not as full of courtly behaviour and good graces, and all things else, that may command young men’s minds, as well as thou art? And dost thou think that they are not so skilful (who are (alas) a great deal more than ever thou wert) in these amorous attempts as thou art? Why, thou art deceived. And if this be thy belief it is false. And dost not likewise believe that he on the other side

THE THIRD BOOK

can please more than one Woman ? But yet I think that if he could but see thee, it would be a hard thing for him to love any other. But since he cannot see thee, nor hath not seen thee these many months, how canst thou deem otherwise than so ? Thou must needs know that no worldly accident is permanent and eternal, for as he was enamoured of thee, and as thou didst please him, so is it possible that another may like him, and he (abandoning thy

New things love) may affectionate some other. For
always new things are ever wont to please a great
please deal more than those which are daily seen.

And everyone doth with greater affection desire that which he hath not than that which he hath already in his own possession.

“ Again, there is nothing, be it never so delightful, which by long time enjoying and using the same doth not wear irksome at last, and of less (if of none) account at all. Who will not moreover sooner and more willingly love a fair and new Lady at his own house, than one whom he hath long since served in a foreign Country and unknown place. He did not also love thee (perhaps) with so fervent and zealous affection as he made thee believe. And neither his tears nor any of his passions were to be held so dear, and so sure a pledge of such great love, as he did still affirm, and as thou didst think that he did bear thee. Many men also, departing from their beloved, are tormented with anguish, and grief of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

mind, with bitter wailings, taking their woeful *congies*, swearing deeply, and promising many things profoundly, which with a good and firm intent (perhaps) they mean to perform, but some sudden and new chance controlling the same, is an occasion to make them forget all their former oaths and protestations.

“The tears, oaths and promises of young Men are not now, and of late, become arres and pledges of ensuing deceits for simple and credulous Women. They are generally more skilful and more apt to know all these things, than in knowing how to love, such is their vagabond wills, leading them to these inconveniences. And there is not any of them who would not sooner change ten Women every month than to adhere and keep himself ten months only to one. These continually believe to find out some new customs, forms and devices, and do greatly glory to have had the love (ah, the spoil) of many Women. What dost thou therefore hope for? Wherefore dost thou suffer thyself to be abused with vain and false belief? And yet (Fiammetta), though thou knowest not the means, and art not able to withdraw him from this, yet continue thou still in loving him: and show, that with that art, that he hath betrayed thee, thou hast not deceived him.”

And many other words followed these, which did kindle me with fierce and burning anger, and which did with a most timorous heat so inflame my mind,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

that it brought me almost to unbeseeming, furious and frantic actions. Nor the confected rage did first pass away, before the infinite tears (bursting it asunder) did most abundantly issue out of my watery eyes, which were accompanied also (the same nevertheless remaining sometimes with me a good while) with great and grievous sighs, that came smoking out of my smothered heart (which to comfort and cheer up myself again), condemning that which my presaging mind did foretell me of, by main force as it were, the well-nigh lost and fugitive hope, with most vain reasons, did return again. And in this sort recovering almost again all the joy that whilome had left me, I lived many days between hope and despair, being always careful and beyond all measure desirous to know exactly what was become of him that came not.

THE FOURTH BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA



MY tears (pitiful Ladies) have been but light hitherto, and my sighs pleasant, in respect of those which my sorrowful tongue (not so pressed to write them, as my heart so prone to feel them) doth now prepare to set down before you. And truly, if the pains which I have passed hitherto are well considered, they may be rather termed dalliances of a young and wanton gentlewoman than woes of a tormented Lover. Arm your minds therefore with firmness and patience, and let not my promises so make you afraid, that (the things which are past, seeming grievous unto you) you would not be desirous to hear the sequels, which are full of more sorrow, and greater grief. And I care not (gentle Ladies) to comfort you any whit in these sad reports, because you might take the more pity of me, and the more, by how much knowing his malice the greater, by whose impiety all these sorrows did fall upon me, you might be more wary, and less wilful in committing your fond dispositions to young Men's fleeting discretions, and in putting your trusty hope into their trothless hands. And so in talking with you, I

THE FOURTH BOOK

shall (perhaps) oblige myself unto you, and in counselling you make myself unbound, or else, admonishing you by these perplexed accidents (allotted and befallen to me) I shall help, if not heal, your amorous maladies. I say therefore (good Ladies) that with such divers imaginations (which you have a little before comprised by my discourse) I was continually molested, when, after more than a month past of his promised return, I heard certain news on a day of my beloved young Gentleman. And thus it was. That going with a devout mind on a day to visit the sacred and religious places, and to offer up to the Gods some orisons for the release of my hard mishaps, that, restoring Panphilus to me again, or else driving him utterly out of my mind, I might recover my banished comfort, it came to pass, that being in company with many wise and discreet Ladies (some nearly allied to me by blood and affinity, and others conjoined to me by ancient familiarity) set upon pleasant discourses, and in merry veins, there arrived by chance a Merchant, who, no otherwise than Ulysses and Diomedes did to Deidameia, began to show forth his gems and precious Jewels, and such especially as he thought most fine, and fitting best the dainty minds of such young and curious Gentlewomen.

Who also (as I gathered by his speech, and he being also demanded of one of the company) saith that he was an inhabiter of that City where my

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Panphilus was born, and dwelled. But after having shown many of his knacks, and some of them bought of the Gentlewomen, others priced and given him again, they entered into pleasant and merry talk amongst themselves, and whilst he did look for his money, one of them, who was of a young and flourishing age, of a most beautiful countenance, and of noble blood, commended of many for her rare qualities, and of most for her courtly and nice behaviour, and the very selfsame Gentlewoman who had asked him before what he was, and from whence he came, demanded of him again, if he had ever known one Signor Panphilo his countryman. Oh, how much with these and many other demands did she please my humours, and fulfil my like desires. I was in sooth greatly glad that they fell into such talk, and did most willingly lift up my ears to hear the arguing of them both, but especially to know the effect of his answers, who without delay said :

“ And who is he that doth know him better than I do ? ” To whom she said again, striving (as it were) and importunately forcing herself to know what was become of him : “ And where is he now ? ” “ Oh ” (said the Merchant), “ it is a while since his Father (having no more Children but him) called him home unto him ” : whom the young Gentlewoman yet asking again : “ How long is it since thou knewest any certain news of him ? ” “ Truly ” (said he), “ never since

THE FOURTH BOOK

I came from thence, which is not yet (I think) full fifteen days." She continued still inquiring and said: "And how doth he now?" "Very well," said he, "(it seems) for the very same day that I came from thence, I saw a most fair young Gentlewoman, with great solemnity, feast and joy, enter into his house, which (as I partly understood) was newly married unto him."

Whilst the Merchant was speaking these nipping words, although I gave a doleful ear unto them, yet I stared the inquisitive young Gentlewoman steadfastly in the face, marvelling with myself, and imagining greatly in my mind, what the occasion might be, that should move her to examine such strait particulars and interrogatories of his estate whom I would before this time have believed that no other woman but myself had scarce known. For I perceived, as soon as the sorrowful words (that Panphilus was married) came to her ears, that casting her eyes down, there appeared in her cheeks a red and hot colour, and that her prompt and ready words died presently in her mouth, and by as much as I could perceive, with the greatest pain in the world she stayed her tears (ascended already up into her eyes) from trickling down her cheeks. But I (especially desiring the same), oppressed with sur-saults of unspeakable grief, and suddenly after assailed with another as forcible and as great (jealousy, I mean), I scarcely stayed myself with most vile

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and scolding terms, from reprehending her altered countenance, and disturbed senses, as one grieved at the very heart, that she should show towards Panphilus such manifest tokens of Love, greatly fearing thereby that she had (perhaps) (as well as I) some just occasion to be discontented with the report of these bitter news. But yet I moderated myself, and with great pain and fretting anguish of mind (the like I think was never heard of), I bridled and kept still my troubled and ireful heart, under a modest and unchanged countenance, though more desirous to complain and bewail than to hearken any further after such heavy news, or to see such apparent and wounding signs of corrivality.

But the young Gentlewoman, perhaps with that same forced courage and strength, forcibly retaining her grief within her like myself, and passed it away, as though it had not been she who was before so much troubled in mind and in face, and showing a semblance that she believed his words, the more she asked, the more she found his answers contrary to her desires, and alas most repugnant to mine. Whereupon, leaving the Merchant, of whom so instantly she had demanded news, and disguising her sadness with a visard of feigned mirth, we stayed longer together (than I would), talking diversely of this and that. But after our talk began to grow to an end, everyone went away, and I myself, with a soul fraught full of anger and anguish, fretting

THE FOURTH BOOK

within myself, no otherwise than the enraged Lion of Libia after he hath discovered the Hunter and his toils, my face burning sometimes by the way as red as fire, and sometimes waxing suddenly pale again, sometimes with a slow pace, and sometimes again with a hasty gait, and broad steps, more than womanly modesty did require, sorrowfully returned to my sorrowful lodging. Where, after that it was *Passions of jealousy* lawful for me being all alone, to do what I would, and entered now into my Chamber, I began most bitterly to lament. And when a good while together my infinite tears had washed away a good part of my grief, my speech being come to me more frankly than before, with a faint and feeble voice I began to lament, saying :

“ Now dost thou know the occasion, so greatly desired of thee, of his unjust stay ? Now dost thou know (miserable Fiammetta) why thy Panphilus doth not return to thee again ? Now hast thou found out that, which so seriously thou didst search out ? What dost thou then desire to seek more, miserable wretch as thou art ? What dost thou demand more ? Let this suffice thee. Panphilus is no more thine. Cast away now thy flattering hope for ever seeing him again, and thy desires to have him ever any more. Abandon thy bootless tears, lay down thy fervent love, and leave off all foolish and vain thoughts. Believe from henceforth divine presages, and credit hereafter thine own divining

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

mind. And now begin to know (though too late) the perjuries and deceits of young men.

“Thou art come just to that miserable point whereto other silly women (trusting too much like thyself) have already arrived.” And with these words I rekindled my incensed rage, and reinforced my grievous lamentations. And afterwards with most fierce words I began to speak thus :

“O ye Gods, where are you now ? Where do your just eyes now behold ? Where is now your *Blasphemies of those that be jealous* due anger ? Wherefore doth it not fall upon the contemner and scorner of your might ? O mighty Jupiter, whose divine Godhead can brook no wicked perjuries, and yet is by an execrable imp forsworn, what do thy thunderbolts, and where dost thou now bestow them ? Who hath most justly now deserved them ? Wherefore are they not cast upon that most irreligious and perfidious man, to terrify others, by his perpetual fall, not to forswear thy holy name ? O illuminate Phœbus, where are now thy Darts, with mortal steels, of which fierce Python (in respect of him who so falsely called thee to witness of his detested treachery and deep deceits) did so ill deserve to be pricked ? Deprive him of the comfortable light of thy shining beams, and become his pursuing enemy, no otherwise than thou showedst thyself to miserable Œdipus. O ye other Gods and Goddesses whatsoever : and thou mighty Love, whose celestial

THE FOURTH BOOK

power this false lover hath mocked, why do you not show your force, and pour thy condign wrath upon his guilty head? Why do ye not turn heaven and earth, and all the cruel fates and the infernal sisters, against this new bridegroom, that in the world for a notable example of a detestable deceiver, and for a wicked violater of your righteous laws, a despiser of your might, he may not survive any longer to laugh and flout you to scorn?

“Many less faults than this have procured your heavy indignation not to so just a revenge as this. Wherefore then do you delay it? You are not scarce able to be so cruel towards him that he might for his heinous offence be duly punished. Alas, poor wretch, wherefore is it not possible, that yourselves, injured also, should not feel the effects of his fraudulent dealings as well as I, so that the ireful heat of his deserved punishment should be as well kindled in your revenging breasts as in my injured heart. O Gods, throw all those dangers down, or else turn some of those least plagues upon his hateful head, of the which I did of late doubt. Kill him with any cruel kind of death that pleaseth you best, because I might in one hour feel my total and final grief, that I should ever after have sustained for him, and so revenge yourselves and me at once.

“Do not partially consent, that I alone should bewail the grief of his vile offences, and that he,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

having mocked both you and me, should merely rejoice and disport himself with his new spouse."

But incensed afterwards with less anger, and yet provoked with more fierce and sharp complaints, coming to Panphilus, I remember that I began thus to say :

"O Panphilus, now I know the cause of thy staying there. Now are thy deceits most manifest unto me. Now do I see what kind of love doth hold thee back, and what pity doth keep thee there. Thou dost now celebrate the unhallowed Hymens and espousal rites (nay, wrongs), and I (poor soul, enchanted with the pitiful charms of thy fair tongue, and with thy Crocodile tears deceived) do now consume and waste myself away with mourning and lamenting, making with my floods of tears an open way to my speedy death, which with ignominious titles of thy cruelty and homicide shall quickly ensue.

"And these pleasant years, which I desired so much to prolong, shall be now cut off by thy unjust occasion. O wicked man, and worker of my woes, tell me now with what heart thou hast entertained thy new spouse, with intent to beguile her, as thou hast done to me ? With what eyes diddest thou behold her ? With those eyes that thou diddest entrap me (most miserable and credulous woman) ? What faith diddest thou promise her : that which thou diddest so solemnly swear to me to keep uncorrupted ?

THE FOURTH BOOK

Why, how couldest thou do it? Dost thou not remember that the thing which is once bound cannot be bound any more than once? What Gods diddest thou adjure? Ah, what perjured Gods? Alas,

The thing that is once bound forever can be bound no more miserable woman, I know not what Siren flights and Circean pleasures have so bewitched thee that (in knowing thyself to be mine) thou shouldest transform thyself into so wicked a mind, and sink into the deceitful gulf of thy pleasing fantasies. For what fault (alas) did I deserve to be so smally regarded of thee? Whither is the great love between us so suddenly flown away?

“Alas, what wicked fortune doth so miserably corrote and oppress doleful creatures? Thou hast now committed thy promised fidelity to the winds, and thy faith also of thy right hand given me to the same, the perjured Gods, by whose sacred Godheads, with great desire or show thereof, thou diddest swear to return, and thy flattering words, wherewith thou wert very well stored, and thy feigned and forced tears, with which thou didst not only bathe thy cheeks, but also mine, all these (I say) lightly and rudely heaped one upon another, thou hast rashly committed to the careless winds. And now, scornfully deriding me, thou livest merrily with thy new mistress.

“Alas, who would have ever believed that such vile and bitter gall had been hidden in thy honeyed

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and flattering speeches, and such accursed disloyalty in thy unsuspected dealings?—or would have ever

*How need-
ful it is to
be merry
trusting* imagined that thy tears had been with such
deceitful art sent forth? Certes, not I.

lovers words But rather as thou diddest seem faithfully to speak them, and no less sincerely to lament, so I did with assured integrity give credit to thy words and tears.

“And if peradventure thou wilt affirm the contrary, and say that thy tears were true, thy oaths simply protested, and thy faith given with a pure and upright heart, let it be granted: but what seemly excuse wilt thou allege for not performing them so entirely as thou didst promise? Wilt thou say that the enticing beauty of thy new Lady is the occasion thereof? Why, this will be but a weak reason, and a manifest note of thy inconstant mind. And shall this be besides a sufficient satisfaction of my loss? Alas, no. The sin is not pardoned unless the thing which is taken away be restored again. O most wicked man, was not the fervent love which I bear thee sufficiently known unto thee, and yet (woe is me therefore) do still bear thee against my will? Alas, yes. Thou didst not therefore need so great skill and such subtle wit to deceive me.

“But, because thou wouldest show thyself cunning in the highest degree, thou diddest therefore use all possible art, and malice in thy filed speeches. But boast not (Panphilus) of thy brave victory and

THE FOURTH BOOK

goodly conquest that thou hast got, in deceiving a simple and young woman, and her especially who did put so great trust in thee. My simplicity did merit greater sincereness than thine was. But what ? I believed the reverend Gods no less invoked by thee than thy own self.

“ The which with bended knees, and bowed heart, I pray that they would make this thy greatest part of thy eternal fame, to have deceived a young Gentlewoman, who loved thee more than herself.

“ Ah, Panphilus, tell me now, did I ever work anything against thy mind, or was I at any time so
It is a great shame to deceive a young woman that loveth truly oppugnant to the feeding of thy humours, whereby I deserved so slyly to be affronted and so injuriously betrayed ? I never committed in sooth any other fault against thee (if this be a fault) but when I did so foolishly enamour myself of thee, and did bear thee (more than was due) so great faith and extreme love. But this offence did not deserve such accursed penance in thy cruel conceit. In one thing only (I know) I have too much failed, for doing of which I have justly deserved the anger of the Gods : and this was, to receive thee (wicked man and vile monster) into my chaste and then undefiled bed, and in suffering thy naked side to lie so near to mine. Admit that I was not (as they themselves did well perceive and say) but thou especially wert culpable of this crime, who with thy bold subtlety and cunning practices,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

surprising me alone, and fast asleep in the dark and silent night (as one, who at other times was accustomed to deceive me) first taking me softly in thy arms, my dear honour and unstained honesty being almost violated, before I was thoroughly awaked, what could I do then (alas) when I perceived this?

“Should I have cried out, and with my bootless clamours have blotted my undoubted virtue with perpetual infamy, and for thee, Panphilus, whom I ever loved more than myself, procured a certain and sudden death?

“I strived apace (the Gods know) and with my feminine forces (as much as I could) resisted thy eager will, which (not able to control) being overcome, and myself wearied, thou didst enjoy thy greedy prey.

“Oh, that that black day, which did in course bring on this damned and wicked night, had been my last, to have ended in the same my virtuous and unspotted life, with an honest and patient death!

How dearly honesty ought to be esteemed Oh, how many bitter griefs and what gripping corsives will assail me from henceforth: and thou, with thy Wedded wife, wilt (for thy own pastime and to delight her) by one and one unrip thy old loves, and make me (miserable woman) culpable in many matters, abasing my beauties to commend and flatter hers, and discommending my qualities, to set hers forth the more. Both which, and all things else in me, were with

THE FOURTH BOOK

high praise wont to be extolled of thee above all other women's in the world.

“And all those unspeakable favours (which compelled by mere pity and extreme love I did so gently bestow on thee) thou wilt, perhaps, injuriously affirm, that they sprong of hot and burning lust. But amongst many other things, which thou wilt untruly declare, remember (disloyal Panphilus) to speak of thy own deceits, by means of which thou mayest truly swear and say that thou hast left me in a lamentable and miserable estate. And with these forget not also to tell of thy received honours, and infinite courtesies done thee, because thou

Ingratitude mayest make thy ingratitude sufficiently known to thy hearer. Nor let it pass thy mind, nor escape thy mouth, to reckon up how many worthy, valiant and noble young Gentlemen have attempted many times to get my love, and the divers means which continually they practised for the least hope of it, as their glorious and daily musterings before my windows in goodly troops, in the daytime, their jealous contentions by night, and their divine prowess showed in feats of arms, and yet could never unwind me from the labyrinth of thy enchanted love.

“And forget not to tell that (notwithstanding all this), for a woman scarcely known, thou hast of me made a sudden and dishonourable exchange. Who (if she be not perhaps so simple as myself) will with

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

great suspect receive thy dissembling kisses, and will warily defend herself from thy deceitful dealings, from which alas I had never the power to keep myself, and whom I wish may by such an one to thee as Atreus his Philomena was to him, or as the daughters of Danaus to their new husbands, or as Clytemnestra to Agamemnon, or (at the least) as myself (thy iniquity being the occasion thereof) have lived with my dear husband, most unworthy of all these injuries.

“And that she may bring thee to such extreme misery (which now for very pity of myself I do woe-fully bewail) that it may force me against my will to pour out abundant tears for thee. All which things I pray the Gods (if that with any pity they behold miserable creatures) may quickly fall and light upon thee.”

Although that I was greatly troubled with this intolerable grief, and not that day only, but many more after, notwithstanding the alteration that I perceived in the foresaid Gentlewoman did sting me cruelly on the other side, the which drew on my mind sometimes to so ruthless and jealous thoughts as I was not other times accustomed to imagine. And therefore said with myself: “Alas, wherefore do I sorrow (Panphilus) for thy long absence, and that thou art combined to a new wife, knowing that if thou wert here present, thou shouldest be mine never the more, but another’s. O most wicked man, into how many parts was thy love dissected, and

THE FOURTH BOOK

how fit doth the etymology of thy name and calling agree with thy nature and condition, since being (Panphilus) thou art a friend to all. To her with whom thou livest there, to this, who lives without thee here, to me, who lives and dies for thee, so that to her, to this, to me, and yet perhaps to none at all. And so, false wretch, by these means thou wert in league with many, when I thought that thou diddest defy all women besides me. And so it came to pass, that thinking to use my own goods, I was too bold in usurping that which belonged to others. And who can tell (this being now known) if any of these (more worthy of favour at the Gods' hands than myself), objecting them for the injury received by me, and craving revenge for the harms that I have done them, have impetrated so much grace, to make me feel these unacquainted woes and undeserved griefs of mind. But whosoever she be (if any there be) let her forgive me, because I have ignorantly offended.

“And my simple ignorance doth deserve some favourable pardon. But with what fine art didst thou feign these things, with what a vile conscience didst thou practise them, by what kind of love, or of what tenderness of mind wert thou drawn to this? I have heard it more than once said, that none can love no more but one, at one and selfsame time. But this rule took exception in thee.

*None can
love at one
and selfsame
time more
than one
at once*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

“ For thou diddest love many or else diddest carry a show thereof too much by one. Ah, careless wretch, diddest thou give to all, or to this one (which could not so well nor so craftily conceal that which thou diddest so maliciously hide from me), that faith, those tears, those sighs, and promises, which thou diddest so prodigally bestow on me. If thou diddest this thou mayest then securely live, and at thy liberty love all, and yet not bound to any woman. Because that which is distinctly given to many cannot be properly said given to one.

“ Alas, how may it then otherwise be but that he who robbeth so many simple women of their yielding hearts must needs be despoiled of his *Why Narcissus was enamoured of himself* by some woman again. Narcissus beloved of many, and being most rigorous to all, was at the last overtaken with the shadow of his own beauty. Atalanta, most swift and pitiless in her race, left her miserable lovers behind, combatting between love, life and death, until Hippomenes with a brave and mastered deceit overran and overcame her, she consenting also willingly to the same.

“ But why do I allege old examples? Myself, who could never be taken of anyone, was at last (ah me, therefore) unfortunately surprised by thee. Hast not thou therefore amongst so many of thy spoil found out some brave one who hath entangled thee? I do not think, but do assuredly believe,

THE FOURTH BOOK

that thou wert once subdued by him, who may tame thee, and subject to her, who had but little cause to be proud of her captive.

“But if thou wert (whatsoever she was, that with so great force did conquer thy subtle heart) why dost thou not apply thy love only to her likings? But if neither to her nor to me thou hast desire to return, at least come back again to this, who could not cover thy secret and false love, nor conceal her own fond passions. And if thou wilt needs have my fates and fortune so contrary to me (which perhaps according to thy erroneous opinion I have deserved), let not my offences prejudicate the right of other women. Return again to them at the least, and keep thy faith first perhaps promised to them, and then to me, and to hurt me only, offend not so many, as I believe thou hast left here, and elsewhere, in vain and fond hope. And let not one prevail more there, than many here.

“She is already thine, nor cannot (although she would) but be still thine. Leaving her therefore in safety, and with infallible assurance of thy love, come, because those which are not able to be made thine, but with thy presence, thou mayest with the same keep them also thine.”

After many of these vain speeches, because they did neither smite into the ears of the Gods, nor sound in those of that obdurate and ungrateful young man, it came to pass, sometimes, that suddenly I changed

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

my counsels into these speeches, saying: "O miserable young woman, wherefore dost thou desire that Panphilus should come hither again? Dost thou think with greater patience to suffer that consuming corsive near thee, which being so far off is most grievous to thy thoughts? Thou desirest, fond woman, thy own harm. And if now thou remainest in (peradventure) that he loveth thee. So if he did return thou mayest be assured that he were come not for thy sake, but for the love of some other woman. Let him therefore remain still there, and from henceforth being far from thee, let him rather hold thy love in doubtful suspense, than living here, by contrary examples, and by too apparent demonstrations, show that he doth not love thee at all. And content thyself at the least, that thou dost not remain alone in these consuming pains, and forsake not that comfort that miserable and distressed women, when they have companions in their miseries, are wont to take."

It were too hard a task for me (good Ladies) to show with what incensed ire, with what quantity of tears, with what burning sighs, and choking sobs, with what gripping griefs of my poor heart, *Every hard thing waxeth soft in time* and with what vehement and doleful passions, I was almost every day wont to meditate on these thoughts, and to think of these matters. But because every hard thing in time is mollified and changed, it happened that

THE FOURTH BOOK

having many days together led this kind of life, and not able to sink any further into the Gulf of grief than I was already fallen, by little and little it began somewhat to relent. And the more it departed from my affected soul, the more was my fervent love and lukewarm hope kindled there again, both which remaining in the place of my surceasing sorrows, made me change my present will, and alter my first desires of having my Panphilus again, and to descant somewhat of his return to me again. And as even now the despair of never enjoying him again was most contrary to me in this, so much the more did my repugnant desire of the contrary increase. And as kindled flames tossed abroad, and blown about with boisterous winds, do grow into greater flakes, so Love, by contrary thoughts in me, was not only nourished, but made of greater force. Wherefore I was moved with repentance of these foresaid frantic passions, and superfluous speeches. And now considering well of that in my mind which unbridled anger had provoked me to say, I was as much ashamed as if they themselves had heard me. And therefore I gently blamed that senseless rage, which in the first assaults of it, with so great force and fury doth take hold of our blind minds that it doth not permit any truth (be it never so much apparent) to be manifest unto them. But notwithstanding, the more it is kindled, the more in space of time it

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

weareth cold again, and doth make that afterwards clearly known which rashly before it condemned in words and deeds. Wherefore having recovered my right mind again, and after my senses were better settled, I began thus to say: "O most foolish young Woman, wherefore dost thou thus molest

thyself? Wherefore without any certain
Lovers occasion or knowledge dost thou consume
sometimes thyself in the heat and rage of thine own
blame and anger? Say that this is true that the
sometimes Merchant told (which perhaps is not), and
excuse their admit that he hath married a wife, is this
beloved so great a matter? An inopinate thing indeed
again (I must confess), which thou didst not think would so soon fall out. And yet it is most requisite that young men in these causes must please and obey their Fathers' wills. For if his Father would have it so, with what face or colour could he deny it? And thou must also believe, that most of them that take wives, may love them as well, and yet esteem of others more. And, that the copious plenty which busybodied wives yield to their quiet Husbands is an occasion of sudden cloying, although they never did so much please and delight them in the beginning. And what dost thou know, how much, or whether, she doth content him or not? Perhaps Panphilus took her by mere compulsion, and loving thee more than ever he did her, it is (perhaps) no small grief unto him, and doth think the time too

THE FOURTH BOOK

long and tedious in being with her. And if she please him, thou mayest yet hope, that she will quickly seem unpleasant, and irksome unto him.

“And of his promised faith and religious oaths thou canst not truly, with any reason, accuse him, because, coming to thee again, he shall in thy Chamber fulfil the one and the other, and what else he hath avowed to our mutual and great joy. Have therefore recourse to the Gods with prayers, that Love, which is able to do more than pledged oaths, or pawned faith, may move and make him return to thee again. And besides this, why shouldest thou have any suspicion of his disloyalty, persuaded thereunto by the troubled mind, only, and altered countenance of the young Gentlewoman? Dost thou not know how many young Gentlemen love thee in vain, who if they knew thee to be Panphilus his Mistress could not choose but be greatly aggrieved? So must thou think it possible, and no strange thing, if he is beloved again of many women, who would be as sorrowful and as heavy to hear that of him which grieved thee so much, although for divers occasions everyone might be especially discontent.”

And in this manner, forging sundry fancies with myself, I came (as it were) again to my first hope. And whereas I had before thundered forth many blasphemous curses against his dealings, now with humble and mild petitions I entreated him, and persuaded myself to the contrary. Thus hope re-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

covered once again, my tormented heart had not, for all that, any force to be merry, but there appeared rather in my countenance signs of sorrow, and I felt in my mind a continual molestation, so that I knew not what to do, or how to think of these

The conditions of angry lovers, and of those that are overcome with their passions perplexities. My first cares were fled away, and in the first fury of my sudden anger I had in rage cast away all the stones which were memorial testimonies of the overpassed days, and had burned all the Letters I received from him, broken all

his favours, and rent in pieces all his other trash.

I took no pleasure now to gaze upon the heaven, as she, who was uncertain and doubtful of his return, being thoroughly persuaded of it before. The desire that once I had to hear amorous histories and tales, and to pass the night away in such exercises, was quite dead, and the present time, which had abbreviated now the Summer nights, did not grant these things, of which oftentimes either all or some great part I passed away without sleep, continually spending them in pitiful complaints, and in sad cogitations. And if I enjoyed sometimes the benefit of sweet sleep, my fancies were nevertheless troubled and tossed about sundry dreams, some of them seeming very joyful unto me, and some full of sorrow and care. The resorting to public places, temples and feasts was irksome now unto me, and I did never (or else very seldom,

THE FOURTH BOOK

when I could do no other) visit or desire to go to them. My face being on the sudden become lean and pale caused so many marvels, doubts and sadness in my house that everyone talked diversely of the same.

And looking and living in this pitiful case, and making semblance that I knew of nothing, I remained the most pensive and the most sorrowful woman that might be. My doubtful thoughts did draw on and waste most part of the day, uncertain whether I might resolve myself to mirth or moan. But seeing the nights fitting best my unpleasant humours, and finding myself alone in my Chamber, after having first lamented my woes, and talked many things with myself, stirred up and inspired as it were with better counsel, I turned my devout prayers to Venus, saying :

“O singular beauty of the Heavens, O most pitiful Goddess, and most holy Venus, who in likeness of thyself, in the beginning of my
Fiammetta's
prayer to
Venus anxieties, didst appear unto me in this Chamber, afford me now some comfort for my great griefs, and by that reverend and internal love that thou didst bear fair Adonis mitigate my extreme pains. Behold what tribulations I suffer for thee. Behold how many times the terrible Image of death hath been presented before mine eyes. Behold if my pure faith hath deserved so much pain as I wrongfully sustain. Being but

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

young, and not knowing thy darts, I suffered myself at thy first pleasures and without denial to become thy subject. Thou knowest how much good thou didst promise me: and I cannot truly deny, but that I have enjoyed some part thereof, but if thou wilt comprehend these sorrows, which thou diddest give me, as part also of that good, then let Heaven and earth perish in one hour, and let all laws like unto these be annihilated, and made new again with the world. But if they seem unequal in thy sight (as I hope they do) then let (O gracious Goddess) thy promise be fulfilled, because thy holy mouth may not be thought or said to have learned to dissemble (as mortal men's do). Send forth thy Son with his golden arrows, and with thy firebrands, to my Panphilus, where he doth now remain so far distant from me, and inflame his heart in such sort (if peradventure, for not seeing me so long time, it is waxen too cold in my love, or too hot with the present beauty of another) that, burning as I do, none occasion whatsoever may withhold him from coming back again. Because taking again some comfort and ease under the heavy burden of these calamities, I may not so quickly die.

“O most fair Goddess, let my words sound into thy ears, and if thou wilt not set him on fire, pull out of my poor heart thy wounding Darts, because I may (as well as he) spend my days without such

THE FOURTH BOOK

great grief." With this form of prayers (although I saw their effects but vain, yet thinking that they were heard) I did with small hope somewhat lighten my torments, and beginning new thoughts I said :

“ O Panphilus, where art thou now ? Alas, what doest thou ? Hath now the silent night surprised thee without sleep and with so many tears as it hath taken hold of me ? Or doth thy young spouse perhaps (not heard of me at all) hold thee in her arms, or yet, without any remembrance of me, dost thou sweetly sleep ? Alas, how may it be that Love can govern two Lovers with so unequal Laws, both loving so firmly, as I am too assured that I do, and as perhaps thou dost, I know not ? But if it be so, that these thoughts do occupy thy mind, as they do overcome mine, what wicked prisons or merciless chains do hold thee, that in breaking of them dost thou not return to me ? I know not (certes) what might stay me from going to thee, unless my beauty (which would without all doubt be an occasion of my utter shame, and a great impediment to me in all places) did not only keep me back. What business soever, and what other occasions of stay thou diddest find, should be by this ended, and now thy Father should have glutted himself with thy daily company, who is I know (and for whose death, the Gods know, I do continually pray) the only occasion of thy stay there. And if not of this, at the least of robbing thee from me, he

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

was undoubtedly the only cause and means. But I fear me, poor soul, that going about to pray for his death thou dost prolong his life, so contrary are the Gods to thy requests, and so incroyable in everything I crave of them. Ah, let thy love (if it be such as it was once wont to be) conquer their opposite force, and come again. Dost not thou think that I lie sadly all alone a great part of the tedious nights in the which thou diddest once bear me faithful company, though accompanied (I must needs confess) with millions of martyring thoughts. Alas, how many long Winter nights lying acold without thee, in a great and solitary bed, have I passed heavily away. Ah, call to thy forgetful mind the sundry kinds of these pleasures, which in many things we were wont to take together, remembering which, I am then certain, that there is no other Woman able to divide thee from me. And this belief doth make me (as it were) more surer than any other thing that the news of the new spouse are but false, which if they were true, yet she cannot (I think) take thee from me, but for a time. Return therefore, and if sweet delights have no force to draw thee back again, let the desire which thou hast to deliver her (whom above all other Women thou lovest, from sudden and shameful death) persuade thee to be reclaimed. Alas, if thou wert now returned, I hardly believe that thou couldest know me again, for so hath exceeding sorrow and anguish of mind extenuated,

THE FOURTH BOOK

and altered my former and fair countenance. But that which infinite tears hath taken from me a short gladness (in seeing thy sweet face) shall quickly restore to me again, and I shall be once again that Fiammetta which I was before. Ah, come, Panphilus, come, because my heart doth still call upon thee, suffer not the flower of my young days to perish in dole, altogether prest for thy delights, and vowed to thy pleasures. I know not, alas, with what modesty I could bridle my sudden and exceeding joy if thou wert here again, but that unmoderately it should be manifest to every public person. Because I doubt (and justly) that our love, with great wisdom and patience a long time concealed, might not be perhaps discovered to everyone. But yet wert thou come to see, and to try, whether ingenious lies could as well take place in prosperous events, as in adverse and crooked accidents. Alas, I would thou wert for all this come, and if it could not be better, then let everyone that would, know it, because I would think quickly to find out a plaster for every wound."

This being said, I suddenly rose up and ran to the window as if he had understood my words, but I perceived myself (alas) deceived in my foolish imagination, in thinking that I heard that which I did not, and that he knocked at the door, as he was sometimes wont to do. Oh, how many times, if any of my other careful

*The vain
belief of
Lovers*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Lovers had known this, might I have been dishonourably dealt withal, if any malicious and crafty person had feigned himself to be Panphilus in such a case. But after that I had opened the window, and looked towards the Gate, mine eyes made me more assured of this manifest illusion, and so was my vain joy tossed with a true and sudden turbation of mind, not unlike to the tempestious waves (after that the strong Mast, broken in pieces by blasts of mighty winds, with crumpled sails, by main force of them is thrown into the Sea) without resistance do cover and hide the endangered ship. And returning after my old wont to my accustomed tears, I did miserably begin to lament and bewail. And forcing myself afterwards to give some rest to my tormented mind, drawing up the vapours of sweet sleep into my closed eyes, in this manner

*Sleep the
rest of all
things, the
peace of all
men's minds* with myself I did call upon them again :
“ O quiet sleep, the most pleasant rest of all mortal things, and vain peace of men's minds, which dost shun all care like an enemy, come to me, and with thy operations drive out of my burning breast these smothered thoughts, these heavy cares, and these ruthless and restless fancies. O thou that dost restore wearied bodies, and hardened in cruel and breathless pains, to ease again, and dost make them fit and fresh to endure new labours, why dost thou not come ? Thou givest repose to others, give also some little rest to me,

THE FOURTH BOOK

whose need is more than any other's else. Forsake the eyes of merry and pleasant young Gentlewomen, who holding now their Lovers in their arms, and passing the time joyfully in the exercise of the Goddess of Cyprus' games, do utterly refuse and hate thee. And enter into mine, who lieth here alone, forsaken, and choked with Seas of sorrowful tears, and consumed with scalding sighs. O thou the tamer of fierce and wicked creatures, and the better part of man his life, let me take some comfort by thee, and reserve thy absence until that time when Panphilus with his pleasant discourses shall delight my weaned ears, which shall be never wearied in hearing him, and my desirous eyes, with his brave beauty in looking on him. O feeble brother of dark death, which dost equally intermeddle false things with true, enter into my sorrowful eyes. Thou didst once overspread Argus his hundred eyes, commanded by jealous Juno to watch, and unwilling to sleep. Alas, come now into mine, which are but two, and which do with great desire attend thy grateful entrance. O Haven of life, rest of light and companion of night, which doth come [to] all alike, as gracious to high Kings as to base and poor slaves, enter into my sorrowful breast, and making a pleasant sojourn there, recreate a little my daunted spirits. O most sweet sleep, which dost compel human generation (fearful of death) with more patience to learn her long and

*The
property
of sleep*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

lingering coming, possess me with the effects of thy force, and drive from me these infectious hurts, in the which my unquiet mind troubleth itself without any profit at all." Morpheus, more pitiful unto me than any other God to whom I offered up my prayers (admit that he made delay in granting me that favour which I besought him by my importunate orisons), after a long space (constrained more by the force of my pitiful prayers and unpitied disquiet than of his proper accord) came slowly and silently stealing into my eyes, and so (myself not perceiving him at all) crept in by the windows, as yet half open,

*Dreams of
hapless
Lovers*

into my giddy head, which did greatly need his presence and help: and being most willingly entertained there, did wholly turn himself up and down, possessing every place of it. But sweet and desired peace, although that sleep was come, did not yet enter into my unsettled mind, but in lieu of thoughts and tears, a thousand fearful visions (full of infinite terrors) did make me greatly afraid, believing, verily, that no hellish fury remained in Pluto his Cities, but that every one in most horrible forms and ugly shapes (methought) did appear many times unto me, threatening me of divers ensuing stratagems, and oftentimes with their ghastly looks breaking me out of my momentary sleep, which afterwards (as though I had not seen them at all) I was content and glad within myself, that they were but fantastical and foolish shadows.

THE FOURTH BOOK

And in brief, there were but a few of these nights after the unfortunate tidings of this new bridegroom and his bride, in the which I took any pleasure or ease in my forced sleep, and never representing to my wandering fantasies my Panphilus with such joy as they were wont to do many times before. Which thing did no less beyond all measure grieve me, than the contrary without mean to molest me. Of all these cares at last, of all my streaming tears, ceaseless sobs and sighs, and of all my multiplied griefs, but not of the occasion of them, my dear husband had no small inkling, and knowledge, especially when he perceived that the lively colour of my face was changed into a dead paleness, and that my pleasant and shining eyes (depainted round about with two blue and purple circles) were deeply sunk into my forehead. Seeing which things (I say) caused him many times to marvel, how all these alterations should happen.

But perceiving, at length, that I had lost my appetite to meat, and that my wonted sleep had forsaken me, he sometimes asked me what was the cause thereof. Whom I answered, that the weakness of my stomach was in fault, which had so extenuated and appalled my face with that deformed leanness, myself not knowing no other cause why it was thus gone from me but only that. Alas, how simply did he believe (giving entire faith to my deceitful words) this feigned excuse and false tale,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and caused infinite medicines to be made and ministered to me, all which (to content him) I did willingly take, not that I did think to get any

No help of the body can lighten the passions of the soul profit or ease at all by them. For what lightening of the body can ease or assuage the infesting passions of the infected soul?

None I believe. But my mind being purged of them, they might (perhaps) alleviate and help my body much. The medicine available for my malady was but one, which was very precious, dear, and too far off, to make me receive my pristiniat health. But after my deceived husband perceived that all these drugs did help me but a little, or nothing at all, he being more tender and careful of me (than I deserved) by sundry ways and new means endeavoured to purge me of this melancholic humour, and to restore to me my lost and former mirth, but yet he laboured all in vain.

Sometimes with comfortable words he did assay to cheer me up, saying: "There are, sweet Lady, and my dearly beloved wife (as thou knowest well enough) a little beyond the pleasant hill of Falernus, *Delectable places* in the midst of old Cuma, delectable Islands upon the Sea coasts, the situation of which is so sweet, pleasant and delightsome that the like (I think) is not under the cope of wide heaven. They are environed with most fair hills, full of all sorts of fruit, and covered all over with green vines, loaden with goodly bunches of white,

THE FOURTH BOOK

red and purple Grapes, in the valleys of which there are no kind of wild beasts that may with pleasure be hunted but are to be found there.

“Nor far distant from thence, there is a great plain full of game, and fit for all manner of flights of preying and sollacing Hawks. There is the Island Pitycusa, and Nisida, abounding in Conies, and the Sepulchre of great Mesenus, leading away to the dark kingdoms of Pluto.

“There are Sybilla of Cuma her Oracles, there is the Lake Avernus, and the great Theatre (a common and ancient place for many brave pastimes and rare spectacles). There are sweet and clear Fishponds, the Hill Barbarus, and the vain and prodigal labours of the wicked Emperor Nero.

“All which delights, both old and modern, cannot but greatly recreate men’s minds, that never saw them before, who for their pleasure and solace go many times to visit them.

“And besides all this, there are most healthful and wholesome Baths for men and women of all degrees, and most sweet and goodly ones for Ladies of honour and renown. And the air being very temperate and pleasant there, doth continually afford fit times and good occasions and means to visit them. There is no going thither without a merry mind, nor abiding there without great feasts, jollity and pastime, in such brave companies of noble men, Ladies, Gentlewomen, and fine and stately dames of this City.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

“Wherefore I am determined that thyself (not well, as thou sayest, in thy stomach, and troubled worse I fear in mind, and, as far as I can guess, grieved with deep and melancholy passions), for recovery of each sanity again, shall go thither with me : which journey shall not be without great pleasure, assured profit, and speedy help unto thy distempered body and sorrowful mind.” But when I heard his words, doubting lest in the very midst of our sports, and abroad there, my dear Panphilus might return, and so I might not (perhaps) see him, inflicted with inward grief, I stayed a good while pausing, before I could answer him again.

But after seeing his resolute pleasure, imagining also that if he came he would seek me out where-soever I was, I answered him I was ready, at his pleasure, to go whither and when he would. And to be short, not many days after we went thither.

On what contrary medicines did my loving husband excogitate and practise for my helpless griefs. Admit that corporal languors were cured there, yet very seldom or never did any go thither with a whole and sound mind that did return with the same again, whether it was the mere Situation of the place washed with the waves of the Sea (the natural place of Venus’ nativity), or the time in which it is more used (in springtide I mean) as more fit for those things that made it. Neither is that (truly) to be marvelled at, which oftentimes

THE FOURTH BOOK

appeared to me there : that the most honest Gentlewomen, and of best account, disposing for awhile their womanly modesty and shamefastness, did use in all their merry meetings and sports an unwonted kind of unbridled liberty and irrequisite familiarity, and did more lasciviously assemble together in those places (privileged perhaps for such wanton pastimes) than anywhere else.

And I was not only of this opinion, that with less stain to their honours, in those places, in that company, and at those times, they might do it, but all those almost which were accustomed to resort to those Islands, then as full of mirth, glee and feasts as Cypres or Cytherea were, at what time their Ladies' holidays and divers honours were celebrated there. The greatest part of the time there was spent in ease, and passed away some time more in delightful exercises, and not a few times in amorous discourses of Gentlewomen amongst themselves, or else in company of young gentlemen and Gentlewomen together.

There were no viands but most delicious, and which were most dainty to be got, and most noble,
Wine precious, old and the purest wines, of
stirreth up force not only to awake drowsy Venus,
to Veneriy but to raise up to life that vigour which
is already mortified in any man or woman, do follow there. And how much also the virtue of the baths doth confer to the same, they do better know who

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

have sometimes proved them. There the cool Sea banks and most pleasant gardens, and every other place besides, with divers feasts, with new devised sports, with most fine and curious dancings, with all kinds of musical instruments and celestial melody, and with amorous songs and Madrigals, made, played and sung by those lusty youths and sweet Nymphs, did resound forth marvellous and pleasant Echoes. Who is he therefore that can, amongst so many enticing pleasures there, keep himself free from Cupid his darts, who doth without any pain or labour (if I am not deceived) rule there, as in the most principal place of all his kingdoms, and helped by so many friendly allectives doth with great ease, against such willing and capable subjects, use his strength and divine forces.

Into such places (most pitiful Ladies) my husband was wont to carry me to rid me of my amorous burning fever. Into which after that we were arrived, love used no other means towards me than he did towards other, but my soul rather (which could not be wrapped in more strait bonds of love than it was) somewhat (though little enough) cooler, and by the long staying, that Panphilus being from me had made, and by many tears (and sustained griefs) was kindled into so great flames, that I thought I had never felt the like before. And this did not only arise of the foresaid occasions, but remembering with myself that I was

THE FOURTH BOOK

oftentimes there in Panphilus his company, both love and grief (seeing myself without him) did not a little increase in my wounded heart. I saw not any Hill, or Valley, that I (accompanied sometimes of many, and of him, sometimes pitching their toils for wild and savage beasts, sometimes leading hounds, and learning water Spaniels, and laying gins to entrap and snare the silly Fowls of the Air, sometimes baiting hooks with Angle cord, to choke the pretty and foolish Fishes in clear rivers and brooks, and sometimes getting some, and other sometimes missing of their purpose) knew not and perceived, that these were evident testimonies of our mutual pastaunce and glee. Moreover, I did not see any rock, shore or Island there but I said :

“Here was I with my Panphilus, this did he speak unto me here, and this did we here.” Likewise there

*The like
Petrarch
unfolded
most finely
in a certain
Sonnet* could be nothing else seen there which was not first an especial occasion to me with great efficacy to remember him, and with more fervent desire afterwards to see him either here, or else returned in any other place again. As it pleased therefore my dear husband, so there we began to take our delights : sometimes rising up betimes, and so soon as clear day appeared, and mounted upon our swift coursers, and gentle Palfreys, sometimes with hounds, sometimes with hawks, and with both sometimes, running up and down into the nearest

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

places, and most abundant for vallery and venery, now through the shadowed Woods, and now in the open fields, we went earnestly pursuing our game. And seeing many goodly chases, and brave courses there, rejoicing everyone's heart to see them, did but a little or nothing diminishing my sorrowful thoughts, for when I saw any fair sight, or course, therewithal I presently said :

“Oh, that thou wert here, Panphilus, to see this sport, as sometimes thou wert.” But (alas) having now until that point, somewhat sustained, and with less grief endured the beholding, and with some small relaxation of my pains followed these pastimes, by recording them now, and thus in my mind (overcome as it were with secret grief) I left them abruptly off, and let them all do as they listed for me.

Oh, how many times do I remember that in these imaginations my bended bow and arrows did fall out of my hands, in handling of which, in pitching of nets, and letting hounds go, or following them, there was not any Nymph that waited on Diana her train, that did (I think) ever excel me. And it fell out very often, that many times in my chiefest sport of hawking like a careless woman, and thinking of other greater matters, I did let those hawks that I carried on my fist (myself flown as it were out of my wits) with sudden flight to soar away, of

*Divers
pastimes
bring to
unhappy
lovers no
pleasure
at all*

THE FOURTH BOOK

which pastime being in times past most studious, and as much desirous, and not half so careless to commit such faults, I did not only now take no regard, but found no pleasure in them at all.

But after that every valley, hill and all the wide plains were thoroughly traversed up and down, and our company laden with store of prey, we returned home to our pleasant Pavilions, which oftentimes we found full of glee and mirth, by reason of sundry and divers feasts made in them.

Sometimes afterwards sitting under the hollow dens, and entries of high Rocks, that did with their crooked bodies overhang the Sea, and with fresh air shadowing the Sands, where tables being set and furnished with sundry sorts of meats, in company of many Ladies and brave Gentlewomen we made great cheer together.

From which again we were not so soon risen, but divers sweet instruments sounding melodious music, the young Gentlemen and Gentlewomen in most brave order began to lead divers stately and pleasant dances, in which I must needs (though against my will) make one. But because my melancholy mind was not delighted with them, and that the weakness of my body did also deny the same, I danced but a measure or two, and sat me down again. And withdrawing myself behind all the rest, amongst the cloths of Tapestry and Arras that were spread abroad and hung up, I secretly said to

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

myself, "Where art thou now, my Panphilus?" and so sat me down again amongst other Gentlewomen.

And in these places at the very same time giving a willing ear to the skilful music, and the silver sounds of those instruments, which with passing sweet notes entered deeply into my mind, and, thinking of my Panphilus, I did at one time cover and hide, discord, feasts and grief because, listening to the pleasant noise made, every demi-dead spirit of love did regain their former vigour and force in me again: and the remembrance of those merry times did return again to my mind, in which the heavenly harmony of these instruments, touched with rare skill, was wont in presence of my Panphilus to work divers commendable and sweet effects. But seeing not my Panphilus there, with most sorrowful tears and sighs I would willingly have complained on them, if it had been lawful for me in that place. And besides this the sundry Sonnets sung of many young Gentlewomen there (exceeding the Nightingales in sweet notes) were wont in my joyful times to delight my happy mind, of the which, if there was any (peradventure) that did please my melancholic humours, I gave most attentive ear unto the same, and desiring greatly to have it, because rehearsing and singing it afterwards to myself, I might openly and with less suspect, after a modest kind of sort, learn covertly to mourn,

THE FOURTH BOOK

and secretly to sorrow with myself, with those griefs especially that were contained in it.

But after that the reiterated dances and rounds had wearied the young Gentlewomen, every one began to place themselves amongst us, and as it was no rare thing there to see the amorous young Gentlemen thronging about us, did encompass us in the manner of a crown, which thing never happened there, or anywhere else, that I perceived, but it made me call to mind that fatal day, when Panphilus, standing behind a fair knot of young Gentlemen, entrapped me with the virtues of his divine graces. Wherefore I lifted up mine eyes many times in vain, prying and looking between them, being fondly persuaded, by my foolish conceit, that I should in like manner have seen my Panphilus amongst them there.

Wherefore casting mine eyes sometimes amongst them, I marked how some of them with eager looks and pitiful glances did behold the amiable objects of their chiefest desires.

And myself waxed by this time very cunning in those amorous dalliances, with a perplexed eye did view everyone, and note everything they did, and perceived well who loved indeed, and who jested in demonstration, sometimes commending one for the grace that he observed in his discourse, and sometimes another for the pretty invention he used, and for his amorous arguments so well couched

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

together in his loving stints: saying to myself, that my miserable estate and cursed condition had been

After a much better if I had then played the coun-
known error *terfeit, as now they did, reserving thereby*
one waxeth *a free soul to myself, as with dallying*
wise at *and sporting they did keep to themselves.*
length

Afterwards refelling such an opinion, I said: "Nay, I am rather content (if in possessing an evil there is any content at all) to have loved faithfully."

Returning therefore with mine eyes and thoughts to the wanton behaviour and amorous actions of these young Lovers, I reaped some small comfort by their sundry fancies. And when I did perceive that any of them did love more fervently than the rest, I did more commend with myself such well-meaning Lovers. And having thus a long time with an earnest mind beheld them, I began softly to say with myself: "O thrice happy and fortunate are you, who are not deprived of the sight and sense of your understanding as I am! Alas, how was I wont heretofore (as you do now) to solace myself with these indifferent recreations. Long may you enjoy your felicity, since I alone must remain an example of scorn, and a pattern of misery to all the world. If Love at the least (making me discontent with the thing beloved of me) shall be an occasion to shorten my days, then shall it follow that with a tragical death (as Eliza did) I will eternish my lasting fame and memory."

THE FOURTH BOOK

And having thus said, I held my peace, and went again to note those countenances, gestures and actions with which these loving Novices, professed Lovers and retired Soldiers did diversely study to please their dainty Ladies and Gentlewomen. Oh, how many have I oftsoons seen in like places, who (after a great while having looked in every place about for their desired joys, and not seeing nor finding them, deeming and reporting the feast not half so pleasant by reason of their absence, nor so delightsome) with half angry and very sad countenances have gone from thence again. Whereupon some little laughter (although it was but feeble and weak), in the midst of all my melancholy dumps, was permitted to take place, and a little comfort also granted to them, perceiving that I had company in my sorrows, measuring in this sort by mine own miseries other men's mishaps. Then thus disposed (most dear Ladies) as my words do show, the delicate baths, the weary hunting, and the Sea banks had glutted my queasy mind with all kind of pastimes, and cloyed it with superfluities of feasts. Wherefore dismasking my old and former countenance, and discovering the smoke of my choked sighs, and the loss likewise of my appetite to my meat and sleep, to my deceived Husband, and not caring to manifest to the appointed physicians of my health these incurable infirmities, both he and they despairing

*No feast
delighteth
where the
thing be-
loved is
not seen*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

(as it were) with themselves of my life, we returned again to the City. In the which, the conditions of the time preparing many and divers feasts, it framed also with the divers occasions of my manifold griefs. Wherefore it came many times to pass, that to the solemnizing of new espousals I was especially also invited, as being by parentage near of kin to them, or else, by ancient familiarity, friendship or neighbourhood, acquainted otherwise with them. To the which also my Husband oftentimes constrained me to go, thinking by these means to prevent the ordinary course of my melancholy fits, or else somewhat to ease my mind, so greatly infested by them. Whereupon I was at such times urged to take again my forsaken ornaments, and to put my neglected hair (judged of all men before to shine like gold, but not unlike now to ashes) in the finest order I could, wherein I was not to learn how to do it.

*Apassion-
ated young
Gentle-
women care
not how
to adorn
themselves*

And remembering myself with a more deep consideration whom these fine threads of gold, besides all other beauties, were wont to delight, with a new froward passion I did disturb again my fantastical mind, which made me sometimes so much forget myself that I remember, that (no otherwise than called back again from a deep sleep, or raised out of an ecstasy), taking up again the comb that was fallen out of my hands, I returned to my careless and unwilling office. And taking some assured

THE FOURTH BOOK

counsel in my Glass, of the setting forth of those ornaments, with which I had adorned myself, and seeing my face to look very pale, and greatly disfigured, and deeply therewithal apprehending in my mind my lost and altered beauty, I was almost in a doubt whether it was my face or no which I saw in the Glass, but imagining rather that some infernal and hideous fury stood by me, turning myself about, I did verily think and fear that it was behind me. But yet, after that I was tricked up very brave, clean contrary to the quality of my mind, I went with other Gentlewomen to those solemn and sumptuous feasts, in which reigned nothing but mirth, joy, and all manner of merry and pleasant recreations. Merry I term them in respect of others, because, as He knoweth from whom nothing is hid, there was never any since the departure of my Panphilus which was not an occasion to me of most heavy cheer and matter of continual sorrow. Being therefore come to the places appointed for the honours of such marriages, although that in divers places and at divers times celebrated, yet they never saw me otherwise disposed than to remain still at one stay, which was, bearing a counterfeit countenance of content, and a feigned face (as well as I could) of merriness, with my inward mind altogether occupied with subjects of sorrow, deriving the occasion of this sadness and grief as well from joyful and pleasant things which I saw as from

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

sorrowful and unpleasant passions which I felt. But after that amongst other Ladies and Gentlewomen I was with great honour received, my mind not intentive upon new fashions, nor mine eyes desirous to gaze upon brave and rich attire, wherewith all the place did shine, but with a vain imagination deceiving themselves, thinking (perhaps) to have seen Panphilus there (as oftentimes in like places they had done before) they went rolling up and down, and casting their beams in every place round about : and not seeing him, as one now most assured of that of which I was at the first probably persuaded, and like a woman confounded in mine own foolish conceit, I sat me down with the rest of the Ladies, refusing the proffered courtesies, and offered honours, for whose sake (he being now absent) they were wont to be most dear unto me.

And after that the new Bride was come home, and the magnificent pomp used at the Tables was ended, and everyone with his passing dainty cates and heavenly Nectar had cheered up their frolic minds, as divers brave dances, sometimes directed by the tuned voice of some cunning and singular Musician, and other some led and footed by the sound of divers sweet instruments, were begun, every place of the espousal house resounding with a general applause of mirth and joy, myself because I would not be accounted coy and disdainful, but civil rather in such an honourable assembly, and well

THE FOURTH BOOK

mannered, having gone sometimes about with them, I began to sit me down incontinently again, entering still into new and fantastical imaginations.

It came then to my mind how solemn and glorious that feast was which, like unto this, was once made in honour of my nuptial joy, in the
Everything refresheth the memory of the Lover of his fore-passed and happy life which being then but a simple soul in frantic love matters, and free from melancholy passions, as abounding in all joy, I saw in myself with worthy congratulations of everyone honourably saluted, and nobly entreated. And comparing those times with these, and seeing them beyond all proportion altered, I was with great desire (if opportunity of time and place had granted) provoked to weep. This swift and sudden thought did run also in my mind, when I saw the young Gentlemen and Gentlewomen to rejoice equally together, and to be merry alike, courting and devising one with another, sometimes with many pleasant and sweet discourses, and sometimes with many singular and pretty devices, fit for such purposes, how that once I beheld my Panphilus in like places, and how in his company he and I all alone had passed the time there together, and could not now do the like. And it grieved me no less to see myself deprived of the occasion of making such kind of joy, and enjoying such content, than I was sorrowful for the pleasure which I lost by the not performance of the same. But from thence apply-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

ing my ears to amorous delights, songs and sundry tunes, and remembering those with myself that were passed, I sighed, and marvellous desirous to see the end of such tedious feasts, being malcontent in the meantime, and sorrowful with myself, I passed them away. Notwithstanding, beholding everything exactly, the companies of young Gentlemen being flocked about the Gentlewomen and Ladies, that now were set down to rest them, and retired into divers places to gaze on them, I did perceive well that many of them, or almost all, did sometimes aim their beams at me, and did talk secretly amongst themselves of divers things touching my beauty, bravery and behaviour, but not so softly but that by manifest hearing of my own part, or by imagination or hearsay of some others, no final part of their speeches came to mine ears.

Some of them said one to another: "Alas, behold that young Gentlewoman, who had not her
Divers opinions and speeches of men paragon for beauty in our City, and see now what an one she is become! Dost not thou see how strangely she is altered, and how appalled her once fair face is grown, myself being as ignorant of the cause as amazed to see the effects." And having thus said, looking on me with a most pitiful and mild eye, as they who were greatly condolent of my griefs, going away left me full of compassion, and more piteous towards myself than I was wont to be. Others did inquire of

THE FOURTH BOOK

one another, amongst themselves, saying : “ Alas, hath this Gentlewoman been sick ? ” And afterwards did answer themselves again, saying : “ It seemeth so, because she is waxed so lean and pale. Wherefore it is a great pity, especially thinking of her former beauty that is now faded quite away.” But there were some of a deeper reach than the rest, whose true surmises grieved me very much, after many guesses and speeches amongst themselves, saying : “ The paleness of this young Lady is a manifest token of an enamoured heart. For what kind of infirmity doth bring a Lover to a lower estate of body than the unruly passions of fervent and hot affection ? She is undoubtedly in love. And if it be so, he is too cruel and inhuman that is the cause of such unworthy consequences (grief and cares I mean), that make her look with so pale and thin cheeks.”

When I had heard these nipping words, that rubbed up my festered wound, I could not withhold my sighs, perceiving that others were more ready to pity my miseries than he to prevent these mishaps who by greatest reason, and most of all, should have had compassion in his thankless heart. And after I had fetched many deep sighs, with an humble and low voice I earnestly besought the Gods that in lieu of their kindness towards me they might have better success in their Loves. And I remember again, that the value of my honour and honesty was not small

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

amongst some of them, who in talking together did favourably seem to excuse the foresaid true surmises, saying: "The Gods forbid that we should hatch such a thought in our minds, to say, that fond Love should molest this wise and modest young Lady, or that blind affection could trouble her mind at all. For she, as she is endued with as great honesty as any other, so was she (as it ever seemed) never addicted to such vanities as many of her co-equals, and hath not showed at any time so much as a semblance of wanton boldness, but continually arguments of wise and modest behaviour. Nor amongst the divers communications and companies of curious

Love is a passion not supported any long time and inquisite Lovers, there could be never heard any speech of her Love, not once imagined amongst them, which is so furious and forcible a passion that it will not be any long time concealed, but will like restrained flames violently burst out unawares."

"Alas" (said I then to myself) "how far do they roam from the truth, not deeming me to be in love, because (as it is the manner of fools) I make not my love public to the view of everyone, and preach it not openly abroad, to be secretly tossed from mouth to mouth, as others (vainly glorying in theirs) are commonly wont to do." There came also sometimes oppositely before me many young and noble Gentlemen, proper men of personage, of sweet and amiable countenances, in everything gracious, courageous

THE FOURTH BOOK

and courteous, and the chiefest flowers of our City, who oftentimes before, by many cunning means and drifts, had to the utmost of their power attempted and laboured to have drawn but the devotions of my eyes to the desires of their hearts. Who, after that a certain while they had seen me, so much deformed and altered from that I was wont to be (not well pleased perhaps that I did not at the first frame my affections to their fancies), disdained now to look at me, and forsook me, saying : “ The brave beauty of this Lady is gone and turned to a bleak hue, and the glory of her inflaming desires is now extinct.”

Wherefore shall I hide that from you (fair Ladies) which doth not only grieve me to rehearse, but generally all Women to hear ? I say therefore that although it was the greatest grief in the world to think that my Panphilus was not present, for whose sake my then excellent beauty was most dear unto me, yet in such upbraiding sort to hear that I had lost it, it was no less than present death to my soul. And besides all these things, I remember that being sometimes invited to such feasts, I have been drawn perforce into the company of many pleasant Ladies, diversely discoursing amongst themselves of amorous conceits, where with willing ear, harkening what issue infinite Lovers have had in their hot passages, I easily perceived that there was never any of them tormented with so fervent passions as

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

I am: nor their love beset with so many miseries, nor contrived with such secrecy, as mine was. Although that of more happy and fortunate Lovers, and of less honourable loves, also the number is greater.

In this sort therefore, sometimes eyeing, and sometimes giving ear to that which was done and spoken in these places, like a pensive and sad Woman I passed away the weary time. After that the Ladies and Gentlewomen had rested themselves a pretty while, it happened that many brave young Gentlemen rising up, and amongst other Gentlewomen invited me oftentimes to dance, but as often in vain went from me again. Who remaining nevertheless in their disports (with minds free from heavy thoughts and high intentions), some moved with desire to show perhaps their greatest cunning, and others pricked on thereunto by spurs of hot and burning love, but all very curious in the same, myself sitting by myself alone, with a scornful mind and coy looks, did mark the new-fashioned tricks, the gesture and behaviour of many Gentlewomen there.

And certes I blamed some in my mind, although I greatly desired (if it might have been) to do as they did, if my Panphilus had been present there. Who, as oftentimes as his dear remembrance came to my doleful mind, so often was it sufficient matter, and the only occasion of my new melancholy and

THE FOURTH BOOK

fresh sorrows : and who doth not (as the Gods know) deserve the great love, which continually I have borne, and yet do still bear him. But after that with no small grief I had a great while beheld these dances, which with the sudden sursaults of other grievous thoughts seeming unpleasant and tedious unto me, urged as it were with some other desires, I rose up most willingly from my place, and to burst asunder my heaped and swelling sorrows (whose open and sudden discovery I greatly feared) *Grief is re-* I got myself smoothly away into a solitary *claimed by* and secret place, and there giving full scope *lamentation* and leave to my flowing tears, I acquitted my foolish eyes, for all the vanities that they had seen, with an austere and due guerdon, which were not distrained from them without many bitter words, kindled with burning anger, but knowing also my miserable fortune to be so cruel towards me, I remember that sometimes I began thus to inveigh against her, saying :

“ O fearful Fortune, mortal enemy to every happy creature, and only hope of miserable men. Thou the sudden changer of kingdoms, *The pro-* and of mundane things, dost as a helper *perties of* with one hand lift up, and as a destroyer *Fortune* with the selfsame throw down again, as thy indiscreet judgment doth direct thy inconstant will, not content to be wholly anyone's, exalting him aloft in one thing, or else in another, casting him utterly

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

down, or, after that thou hast made him happy by any lent felicity, dost heap upon his mind new and uncouth cares, because that worldly men, living in continual want and need, may (according to their vain opinion, and their endless pride) implore thy help, and adore thy deity. Yet art thou still blind and deaf, disdaining to behold the manifest miseries, and refusing to listen to the complaints, of miserable creatures, triumphing only with those whom thou hast unworthily (perhaps) exalted. Who, embracing thy friendly favours, and honouring thee with all their devotions, whilst with a smiling look and flattering promise thou art entertaining them, even on a sudden, with some unexpected accident or other, find themselves utterly thrown down by thee, and then (though too late) do miserably perceive how thou hast changed thy serene smiles into froward frowns.

“Amongst the number of which myself (wretched woman) may be put, who not knowing of my own part any malice wrought against thee, and ignorant of any heinous offence and indignity, whatsoever, perpetrated by me against thee, that might reduce thee to so severe a revenge, am most unworthily and pitifully punished. Alas, whosoever reposeth trust in great and mighty things, and like a puissant Prince ruleth in high and stately palaces, applying always his quiet and credulous mind to joyful and pleasant objects, let him cast his eyes upon me,

THE FOURTH BOOK

and behold how, from a high and renowned Lady of felicity, I am now become a most low and wretched handmaid of fortune, and (which is worse than this) how cruelly I am rejected and disdained of the only lord and master of my subjected heart.

“ Ah, Fortune, thou didst never give any more effectual example of thy unconstant mutability than myself, if that with a perfect and sound mind my first and latter condition of life be well considered. I was received of thee, fickle Fortune, of thee (false Fortune) was I received into this world, in abundant quantity of goods (if nobility, riches, honours and dignity be any part of them) which were moreover by thy bountiful and large hands (which thou didst never yet withdraw from them) daily and copiously augmented. So that (in sooth) like a mighty Lady I did continually possess them, as mutable things use them, and, beyond the common course of women’s covetous nature, did liberally impart them to others.

“ But being ignorant, Fortune, that thou wert also the same which with unequal passions and careful thoughts didst surcharge the mind, and not knowing that thou hadst also a great portion in Love his Signories, I fell in love as thou wouldest, and with that young Gentleman whom thou only, and none else, didst then present before my wretched eyes, when I thought myself farthest from any such danger. Whom after that with

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

strong and intricate knots thou didst perceive that he was bound in the Circle of my heart, thou hast (unstable and changing oftentimes) sought to work my harm, and wreak thy undeserved injuries upon me, sometimes disturbing our linked minds with vain and deceitful imaginations, yea, and sometimes our eyes with pitiful and public glances, because our love made manifest might be hurtful unto us.

“And I am certain that many times thou hast been (even as thou wouldest thyself) the only cause that many displeasing and discrepant words of my beloved young Gentleman have come to my ears, and hast with mine of like consequences filled his again, able enough (being credited) to have engendered hatred and discord, and to have hazarded a sudden mislike, but their issue and thy drifts were never answerable to thy determinations. Because, admit thou dost as a Goddess govern all exterior things as it pleaseth thee, the virtues of thy mind are never the more subject to thy might.

“Our wisdom hath continually gone beyond thy wiliness in this point. But what doth it avail, for all this, to oppose it against thee, since thou hast a thousand flights to endamage thy enemies. And that which thou canst not bring to pass by right, thou dost contend to work by wrong. Not able to sow the seeds of malice and envy in our hearts,

THE FOURTH BOOK

thou hast endeavoured to inculcate into them things of like effect and predicament, and besides this to replete them with the greatest grief and anguish of mind. Thy industries, annihilated heretofore and made frustrate by our provident wisdom, were strengthened again by thy other fraudulent forces and peevish ways, and as a perverse enemy, as well to him as to me, thou hast practised the means with thy ominous accidents, by long distance of place to divide us both asunder.

*That which
Fortune
cannot bring
to pass by
right, she
doth by
wrong*

“Alas, when would I have thought that in so strange a place, so far distant from this, and divided from me by such great Seas, so many high hills, wide fields, valleys and plains, and by so many great rivers, the only source and cause of all woes should (by thy means) be sprung up, and grow still? Truly never. But yet it is so, and for all that though he be far from me, and I from him, I doubt not but that in despite of thee, Fortune, he loveth me, as I love him, whom above all things else in the world I do most dearly esteem.

“But to what end and effect doth this love serve more than if we were either mere strangers or mortal enemies? Alas nothing at all to no purpose else. Our wits and policy therefore prevailed naught against thy contradictions. Thou hast carried away with him all my delight, all my good, and all my joy: and with these my merry times, feasts

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and pastimes, my gorgeous attire, my peerless beauty and my pleasant life. In lieu whereof thou hast left me dolours, grief and sorrow. But yet, thou couldest never make me relinquish his love, no, nor is thy might so great (as great it is) to make me by intermediate fits only fancy him. Alas, if I, being yet but young, had committed anything against thy Godhead, the simplicity of my unripened years should have excused my raw defects. But if thou wouldest nevertheless take some revenge upon me, wherefore didst thou not wreak it upon thy own things?

“Thou hast unjustly (Fortune) put thy Sickle in another’s Corn. For what hast thou to do or to in-
To put one’s termeddle thy laws with love his matters?
Sickle in I have most high and strong towers, most
another’s
corn fair and ample fields, many herds of Cattle, and great store of treasure, which with thine own hands thou hast bountifully bestowed on me, wherefore with consuming flames, devouring waters, cruel rapine and sackage, and wherefore with unlucky death didst not thou extend thy wrath upon them? Thou hast left me those things which may no more avail for my consolation than Midas his golden favour, which he received of Bacchus for his pinching hunger: and hast transported only him away, whom I accounted dearer than Gold, than gems, than rich palaces, yea, more than infinite worlds of wealth. Accursed, therefore, be

THE FOURTH BOOK

those amorous arrows, which presumed to be revenged of Phœbus, and which now sustain such base injuries by thee.

“Alas, if these had never pricked thee, as now they pierce me, with better advice (perhaps) and with more mature deliberation thou wouldest molest thy loving associates. But behold thou hast wronged me, and brought me to this extreme point, that of the richest, noblest and highest Lady I am become the most miserable and unfortunate woman in all my country, and this, cruel Fortune, thou seest too well approved in me. Everyone doth rejoice and spend their times in merry feasts and glee, and only I do still lament, and waste my youth in endless moan, which kind of life is not now begun, but hath so long endured, that methinks thy merciless anger should have been ere this time somewhat mitigated.

“But I forgive thee all, if of pity or of courtesy thou wilt let me favourably enjoy the sweet company of my Panphilus again, as thou hast not without great grief divided him from me. And if perhaps thy anger doth yet endure, let it be satiated upon the glory of my goods and possessions. Alas, cruel as thou art, let my unhappy and poor condition of life grieve thee, and move thee to commiseration of my calamities. Thou seest that I am become such an one that, as a fable to the common people, I am carried from mouth to mouth, whereas

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

my several beauties with solemn fame and with sweet praises were wont to be blazoned everywhere. Begin therefore, gentle Fortune, at the last to be pitiful towards me, because I may with grateful and reverend titles (myself enabled justly to praise to thee) incessantly honour thy mighty majesty.

“To whose prayers if thou dost open a gracious ear, and wilt not rigorously deny the easy effects of so reasonable a demand, then for ever do I vow (and herewithal let the immortal Gods bear record) to erect to thee the lively Image of myself, preciousy adorned, and gloriously set forth in every place and Temple (dedicated and most dear to thee) in token of thy perpetual honour, and everlasting fame. Which with never-dying memorial of thy miraculous pity, subscribed with these words, ‘This is Fiammetta lifted up of Fortune from the deep pit of extreme misery to the highest top of happy joy,’ as shall be published to the open sight and view of all the world.” Oh, how many other things also did I oftentimes declaim with myself, to recount which would be but a long and tedious labour, but all were briefly ended and resolved into bitter tears, by means of which, sometimes it fell out, that being perceived of other gentlewomen, and with many comfortable words cheered up by them, I was much against my will carried to these festival dances.

THE FOURTH BOOK

But who would think it possible (amorous Ladies)
There is nothing that maketh a miserable lover glad but the same is an occasion of greater grief again one way or another that such anguish and grief should so usurp a young Gentlewoman's heart that there was nothing, which could not only not make it merry, but that the same was an occasion of greater sorrow, which cannot but seem incredible to all, though not to me, miserable woman, that hath proved it, doth feel it, and doth know it to be too true.

It came to pass many times that the weather (according to the season of the year) being very hot, many other Gentlewomen and myself, because we might the better pass it away, upon most swift Boats, winged on every side with flashing Oars, we ploughed the gentle waves of 'the calm Sea, singing sometimes, and with playing sometimes on divers Instruments, went rowing up and down to seek out solitary and opacal Rocks, divided from the main shore, entering sometimes into hollow caves, at the foots of steep hills, made by nature itself, under which (being most fresh for wind, and cool shadows) we did many times sit and pass away the heat of the day.

These were, alas, especial and chief remedies offered to me, to refrigerate the corporal heat of my body only, but they lent me not any new ease of those never-ceasing sorrows, and no extinguishment at all of those flames which burned my soul

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

inwardly, but did rather bereave me of such needful helps, because the outward heat being now

The fire of the mind doth not receive any refreshing or ease by exterior things past (which to delicate and tender bodies is doubtless no small annoy) by and by a more ample and fit place was made for amorous and tedious thoughts, which are not only the preserving matter of Venus' flames, but a forcible substance

augmenting the same.

Being therefore come to these places which we had sought out, and shrouding ourselves under them for our refreshing and delight, we went (whither our minds did lead us) up and down, viewing here and there this company and that of young gentlemen and gentlewomen, with goodly troops of which every little Rock, Bank and sandy shore (which were by the shadow of any hill defended from the scorching heat of the Sun beams) not otherwise than a green Meadow with fair and plenteous flowers, were almost all covered. Oh, what intensive pleasure and how great a delight is this to them that have their hearts free from the molesting passions of love. There might be seen in many places fair tables set, and white and fine Diaper cloths spread upon them, and all things so exquisitely done, and with such ornament, magnificence, glory and cost, that the very sight only of them had sufficient force to provoke anyone's mind and appetite, were it never so melancholic, demiss or

THE FOURTH BOOK

drowsy, but only mine, which was too much soaked in sorrow. There might in other places (as convenient time did require) divers others have been seen, how merrily they went to their morning repasts, of whom our company (as we did them again) with cheerful countenances and courteous entreaties was invited to their feasts and sports.

But after that we had (as the rest also) with great feasts banqueted ourselves, and after that (the tables being taken away) we had danced certain Neapolitan rounds, and then (after our accustomed manner) had embarked ourselves again, we went by and by rowing up and down in this creek, and that Cliff, where in certain secret and by places of the Seashore, to the gazing eyes of every curious and wanton young Gentleman, were showed delightful and desired sights, which was : many fair and young Gentlemen stript into their Waistcoats of white Satin without sleeves, and without hose or shoes, swimming, and solacing themselves in the cool water. And gathering Shell-fish amongst these cliffs and hard rocks, in stooping down to take them up, did oftentimes discover the round and snow-white balls of their delicate and fruitful bodies. And in some places again there were others, who with more subtle and with greater industry, with trammels, drags, flewes, and with all manner of nets, and divers others that with angles (to the great delight of the beholders) and with many new devices

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

more, and pretty arts, deceived the silly and simple fish. But what need I trouble myself to declare every particular pastime and pleasure which was practised and taken there? Let them (though they go not thither at all) imagine the like that have exercised themselves, or have any understanding in such things, how many, and of what force they are to recreate the mind. And if they go thither, then they shall see nothing else but mirth and solace, and all kind of youthful disports.

There the open minds of everyone are free from sorrowful passions, the occasions of the contrary being so many and so great that there is scarce a denial of any demand among them.

In these places I confess (because I would not seem to be devoid of courtesy, and would not be troublesome to the whole company) I took a visard of feigned mirth upon me, though I was still sailing with contrary blasts of tempestuous love and envious Fortune in those Seas of griefs and cares

in which since my Panphilus his departure
The grief of the mind is hardly covered with a merry countenance I have continually hulled up and down.
 Which thing how hard it is to perform, they that have tried it may give sufficient testimony thereof. For how could I be merry in mind, calling to mind that I had sometimes seen Panphilus with me, and myself also without him, in like pastimes, whom I did now by distance of many miles know to be denied from me, and

THE FOURTH BOOK

besides this without hope to see him any more. If I were not troubled with any other grief than only care and vexation of mind, which continually held me in suspense of many things, was not this sufficient enough to have confounded my soul alone? And can it otherwise be thought, because forasmuch as the fervent desire that I had to see him had so bereaved me of my true knowledge and understanding, that knowing assuredly that he was not in those places, yet (as though he was there indeed) I did argue in my mind, and, as if this had been true, without any contradiction I proceeded farther to see whether I could espy him out or no. There was not any Boat, Galley, Ship or Bregandine (of all which the Sea coast there was so full, sailing forth, some coming in, some casting and some weighing Anchor, as the azure sky in a clear and frosty night loaden with Golden stars) which I did not first with mine eyes survey, and after by my servants search out and know whither they went, and from whence they came.

I never heard sound of any instrument, although I knew him to be skilful in only one, to the notes and tune of which I did first give an attentive ear, and after ask who he was that played on it, imagining still, that he might possibly be the same, whom I did so carefully seek after. There was not any pleasant Rock, Cool shore or shadowed Cave which I had seen, nor any company left un-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

visited of me, to see if happily I might have found him.

Certes I confess that sometimes this unfeigned and vain hope did abolish a great part of my sighs, which sighs (after that it was gone from
Fiammetta
her sighs
turned into
tears issued
out of her
eyes me) amassed together in the concavity of my brain, whose natural issue was to have been breathed forth, converted now into bitter and brinish tears, were by the conduits of my sorrowful eyes poured forth, and so the counterfeit joys were turned into confected and true anguish of mind.

Our pleasant City, surpassing all other Cities in Italy that are held famous for noble feasts and royal
Naples shows, doth not only exhilarate her Citizens with generous and solemn Nuptials, refresh them with divers sweet walks, Crystalline Rivers, delightful sea sands, pleasant shores and green banks, but, copious also in many goodly sports, as sometimes with one public and sumptuous spectacle, and now with another princely and solemn show, doth rejoyce her people's hearts, and stir them up to exceeding and general gladness. But amongst all other pastimes in the which it doth appear to the world most famous, in Tilt and tourney (which is almost daily exercised there), and generally in all feats of arms, it is chiefly renowned. This therefore was wont to be an ancient custom amongst us (after that the tempestuous and stormy blasts of shaking

THE FOURTH BOOK

Winter are past, and the merry Springtide, with her new flowers and green grass, hath brought again to the world her trepassed beauties, the vigour also and courage of young lusty Lords and Gentlemen being by the quality and season of the time rekindled, and their amorous hearts more prompt than before, to discover their fervent desires) that at the greatest and most stately houses of noblemen, the bravest most honourable Ladies, shining in glittering gold, and adorned with their most precious and rare Jewels, did with these frankly assent to meet joyfully together. I do not think that to behold King Priam his Daughters-in-Law, with many other of the Phrygian Ladies, when, attired and beautified in the bravest sort, they presented themselves, and came before their Father-in-Law, and sovereign, to dance, to feast and to make merry, was either a more rich or goodly sight than for to see in many pleasant places of our City the majestical meeting and brave assemblies of celestial demi-goddesses in the same, which, after that in fair troops they came to the public Theatres (every one to the utmost of her power showing herself most brave, and making herself most beautiful) I doubt not but if any Gentleman stranger, but indifferently conceited and judicious, had arrived there (having considered their haughty countenances, their noble behaviour, and viewed their costly apparel and rich ornaments,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

rather princelike than convenient for many (nay, most) Gentlewomen there) would not have judged them women of this latter age, but would have thought that some of those ancient and magnificent Ladies had been returned again to the world, saying with himself :

“ She for her stateliness doth resemble Semiramis.” This other (gazing on her sumptuous apparel and Jewels) would rather be deemed Cleopatra. Another (considering her courtly and lovely graces) he would have compared to fair Helen. And another (viewing well her gesture and sweet actions in his mind) he would affirm not to be unlike to Queen Dido. Wherefore proceed I thus in comparison of them all ? Every one by herself would rather seem a divine majesty than any human matter. And how oftentimes have I (miserable Woman), before I had lost my Panphilus, heard many young Gentlemen descant upon myself, contending to whether of these two I might have been best compared : to the Virgin Polixena, or to Venus of Cipres. Some of them saying that it was too much to compare me to a Goddess, and others, alleging the contrary, said that it was too little to resemble me to an earthly and mortal woman. There was not amongst so great and noble company any of them remaining long in their places, nor grave silence was kept there.

But the old and ancient Gentlemen, rising up to behold the lusty young Gentlemen, how lovingly

THE FOURTH BOOK

some of them (taking the coy Gentlewomen by their delicate hands to dance) did amorously discourse with them according to the desires of their fancies, and how other some with tuned voice and melodious instrument deciphered the effects of his amorous passions. And in this sort was the hottest part of the day spent in all manner of noble sports and glee that might be devised.

And after that the Sun hath once begun to send forth his beams cooler than before, then do the
*A descrip-
tion of
Autumn.
Italy* honourable Princes of our Ausonian kingdom meet together in that habit as their high estate doth require. Who, after that they have beheld the divine graces of every Lady, and fed their greedy eyes with every Gentlewoman's beauty, and marked well their dancing, commending some more, some less, but all generally, going away with almost all the Knights and Gentlewomen (as well married as unmarried men) after a little while, in great and most brave companies, with rich and new-fashioned apparel, and clean contrary to the rest, with Masks, and other goodly shows, they return back again.

What tongue is there, be it never so famous for golden eloquence and choice words, or wit, never so much commended for excellent sentences and exquisite invention, that could perfectly or particularly set down the Noble and gorgeous Habits, and the sundry brave suits of apparel (as pleasant

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

for variety as wonderful for magnificence), which was seen there ?

Not Homer, certes, so worthy amongst the Grecians, nor Virgil, so highly praised of the Latins, which with stately verse did write the infinite adventures and accidents, which both those noble men, and which the Grecians, Trojans and Italians, had of yore in their open wars, private peace and stratagems. I will therefore endeavour to make a brief relation of them to those Women who did openly never see them performed, which description shall not so vainly be inserted in this my pitiful discourse, and not to so small purpose, but that the wiser sort of Women may comprehend my sorrow beyond any woman's past or present, to be without pause or relaxation still continued : since that with the admirable dignity of so many princely shows and rare sights, it could not by any merry mean (were it never so little time) be broken from that cleaving and cloying grief. I say therefore (to come to the matter) that our noble Princes and valiant Lords were mounted upon Coursers of Naples, and Spanish Gennets, so passing swift in running, that any other beast whatsoever, yea, the very winds themselves (although they made never so much speed), they would in course (invisible almost) leave behind.

Whose youth and lusty years, comely favour, and approved magnanimity and courage, made

THE FOURTH BOOK

them passing gracious, and renowned in every Gentlewoman's eye and mouth. They came prancing forward on their barded horses, with caparisons of purple and crimson Satin, curiously embroidered with fine threads of shining Gold, and with cloth of the same artificially woven by Indian hands, with strange works of divers colours intermingled, filled and bordered with Gold, pearl and precious stones. Whose silken, soft and lovely locks, hanging down upon their stately shoulders, were tied round about with a fine filament of Gold, beset with Diamonds, Rubies and Emeralds, and with many other gems, or else with a little Garland of green Laurel, having

A description of Tilt and Giuoco di canne, much used of the Spaniards, Italians and Moors

on his left hand a light shield, and bearing a strong Lance in his right hand, at sound of Tuscan trumpets making furious and courageous encounters either one against another, or many against many, after the Morisco guise, but generally in the most brave and admirable sort, before the noble Ladies and Gentlewomen begin their heroical sports. Commending him most who with the point of his Lance carried nearest to the ground, and closely couched under his shield, without any disordered motion of his body in the saddle, did show himself in running on his fiery steed.

To such kind of feasts and pleasant shows, as I was ever wont (poor and miserable Fiammetta), I was also invited, and certes not without great grief

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

unto me, because beholding these pastimes it came to my mind that I had whilom seen my Panphilus sitting amongst our more ancient and reverend old Gentlemen, to behold suchlike spectacles: whose sufficiency (according to the admirable gravity of his youth) deserved so high a place. And sometimes standing (as young Pretextatus amongst the noble and grave Senators of Rome) with the fore-said robed Knights, to judge of these pastimes, amongst whom, one for his authority was like unto Secuola, another for his gravity to either of the Catos, and some of so pleasant and delectable countenances that they seemed Pompey the Great or Marcus Marcellus, and others of so stern and martial looks that they seemed lively to represent the worthy African Scipio or Quintus Cincinnatus: all the which, equally and eagerly beholding the running of every one, and calling to mind their young and lusty passed years, pricked to the quick with glory of honour and courage, and muttering and fretting to themselves, sometimes commended one and sometimes another, Panphilus affirming all their sayings, and allowing their censures. Of whom sometimes I heard, how he compared (talking of this and that, now with one, and now with another) and how he resembled all those valiant Champions that did run, to the young and old renowned Heroes of the other worlds.

Oh, how dear a thing was this to my ears, as well

THE FOURTH BOOK

for him that spake it as for them that attentively gave ear unto it, and also for my Citizen's sake of whom it was spoken. So much truly, that the remembrance thereof is yet very grateful unto me. Of our young Princes, whose heroical countenances bewrayed their hardy and courageous minds, he was wont to say that one was like to Arcadius of Parthenope, of whom it is reported, and firmly believed, that none came better appointed and more resolute to the destruction of Thebes, at what time his mother sent him thither, being but a young youth. The next after he confessed to be like the sweet Ascanius, of whom Virgil (a singular record of so brave a youth) wrote so many golden verses. Comparing the third to Deiphobus, and the fourth for beauty to Ganymede.

Then coming to those of riper age, that followed these, he gave them no less perfect and pleasant semblances. For there might you see one coming along with a ruddy colour and a red beard, and with soft, bushy and crisped locks falling down upon his strong and flightly shoulders, and (no otherwise than Hercules was wont to have) bound up with a fine little garland of green leaves, apparelled with costly garments of silk, occupying no more room than the just quantity of his body, garnished with sundry brave works wrought with skilful hand, with a Mantle upon his right shoulder, fastened together with a button of Gold, and with a fair and

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

rich shield covering his left side, and carrying in his right hand a light spear, as was most fit for that sport, whom he said that he was in gesture, and countenance, like to great Hector. After whom another coming along, adorned in like Habits, and with as stout a countenance as the other, having cast up the golden fringed border of his Mantle upon his shoulder, with his left hand cunningly managed his unruly horse, he judged another Achilles. Another following him, shaking his threatening Lance, and carrying his target behind his back, having his soft hair tied together with a fine veil (given him perhaps of his Lady) he called Protesilaus. After whom another following with a fine Hat on his head, of a brown colour in his face, and with a long beard, and of a fierce countenance, he called Pyrrhus.

And another after him with a more mild look, and with a sweet and smooth face, and more gorgeously adorned than the rest, he thought to resemble Paris of Troy, or King Menelaus.

What need I prolong my narration about this royal rank any further. In brief, as they passed in that long and goodly company, he showed who was like to Agamemnon, who to Ajax, who to Ulysses, who to Diomedes, or to any other Grecian, Trojan or Latin worthy of eternal praise and memory. Neither did he give them these names merely of his own pleasure, but, conferring and confirming his arguments with acceptable reasons about the

THE FOURTH BOOK

manner of these paragoned Lords, did show that they were only and worthily compared unto them. Wherefore the hearing of these reasons was no less pleasant than to see the very same persons by whom and for whom he spake and framed them.

The gallant troop therefore of Horsemen, after riding three or four times with easy pace up and down, to show themselves to the lookers-on, courageously began their fierce courses, and, standing almost right up in their stirrups, bravely couched under their Targets, with the points of their Lances carried so even as they seemed to shave the ground,

The order of those that run a Tilt swifter than the swiftest wind their horses carried them away. And the air resounding with the shouts of the people that stood by, and the jangling of the silver and golden bells, that every horse was almost trapped withal, the noise also of Trumpets, and of other martial instruments, the flapping and smiting of the caparisons against the horses' sides, and of their bases in the air, and the flyttering of their Mantles also against the wind, did prick on their fiery steeds to a more hot, braver, swifter and more courageous course.

And thus, everyone with great delight and joy continually beholding them, and marking the order of their courses, they made themselves to be worthily admired, and not unworthily praised in the secret hearts and open mouths of all the spectators.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

How many Ladies and Gentlewomen (someone seeing her Husband amongst these here, another her Lover, and some their near Kinsmen) did I see many times clap their hands, and most highly rejoice at the dexterity and courage of their friends? Not a few truly. And not only these, but strangers also: myself only excepted: who (although I saw my Husband there, and other of my kindred with him) with sorrowful cheer did behold him, not seeing my Panphilus there. And when I remembered how far off he was from me.

Alas, good Ladies, is not this a marvellous thing, that that which I see, should be the material cause and substance of my sorrow? And that nothing may make me merry. Alas, what soul is there in hell, never so much tormented with endless pain, that seeing these things could not but feel some respective joy? Why, not one at all (I think). For they, ravished with the sweetness of Orpheus his harp, forgot for a time their cruel pains and torments. But I, set in the midst of a thousand torments, and placed amongst a thousand joys, and continually exercised in many and sundry kinds of sports, cannot (I say) bury my grief in momentary oblivion, nor assuage and lighten it, be it never so little a while. And put case that sometimes at those feasts, and suchlike, I have with an unfeigned and true countenance hid it, and have given respect to my tedious sighs, in the

THE FOURTH BOOK

night afterwards, when I did find myself all alone, I did prolong, not pardon any part of my tears, but did pour out rather so many of them as the day before I had spared and kept in scalding sighs. And these things inducing me to more pensive and piercing thoughts, and especially in considering their vanities, more apt and possible to hurt than to help, as by proof of them I do manifestly know, the feast being finished, and myself going from it, and not without cause complaining and waxing angry against these vain shadows, and all other worldly shows, I began thus to say :

“Oh, how happy is that innocent man who dwelleth in the solitary village, enjoying only the open air ! Who, employing his sole care *The praise of a solitary life* and labour to invent subtle gins for simple beasts, and to make nets for unwary birds, with grief of mind can never be wounded. And if perhaps he suffer any great weariness in his body, in casting himself down upon the green grass incontinently he refresheth himself again, changing his place sometimes in the fresh river banks, and sometimes under the cool shadow of some great wood, where the chirping birds, with their pretty songs, and the soft trembling of the green leaves (shaken by some pleasant and little wind, as staying themselves to hearken to their silver notes), lull him sweetly asleep.

“Ah, Fortune, hadst thou granted me such a

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

life (to whom thy desired gifts are but a cloying care, and detriment), it had been better for me. Alas, how my high Palaces, sumptuous beds, treasure and great family, anything profitable, and how little pleasant, unto me, when my mind, surcharged with overmuch anxiety, and wandering in unknown countries after Panphilus, cannot have any small rest, nor when any comfortable respiration may be granted to my wearied and breathless soul. Oh, how delightful and gracious a thing is it to press the green and sweet banks of the swift-running rivers, with a quiet and free mind, and upon the naked turfs to fetch a sound and unbroken sleep, which the gliding river with murmuring bubbles and pleasant noise, without fear doth nourish and maintain. These eases are, without any grudge, granted to the poor inhabitants of the country village freely to enjoy, and are a great deal more to be desired than those toys which with many flattering words I have oftentimes fawned on, and have with such diligent and daily care embraced (as the fine dames of the Cities use commonly to do), and which at last, with the careless coil of the tumultuous family, or negligently, broken. His hunger (if at any time perhaps it prick him) with gathering of Apples in the faithful and secure woods he doth drive away, and many young and tender herbs, which the wide Champaigns or little hills of their own free will bring forth, are also a most

THE FOURTH BOOK

savoury and sweet sustenance unto him. Oh, in how many running brooks, Crystalline fountains, and sweet waters, lying down all along, may he quench his thirst, and with the hollow of his hand in clear and streaming rivers? Ah, wicked and pinching care of worldlings, for whose sustentation nature doth require but little and doth prepare light things. We think with the infinite number and sundry sorts of delicate viands to fill the gourmandize of our bodies, and to please our queasy appetites; not perceiving at all, that in them there lie hidden the very causes, by means of which the ordinate humours and good blood are ever more corrupted than nourished.

“ And how many times in cups of gold and silver, richly garnished with gems and precious stones, instead of sweet and delicious wines, do we daily hear that cold and swelling poisons are tasted, and do hourly see that in hot wines and compound drinks, licentious, unbridled and wicked lust is drunk and thrown headlong down. Whereupon, commonly they fall by means of these into a superfluous security: which by wicked words, or damned deeds, doth bring to them a miserable life, or doth pay them home with a most contemptible death, seeing moreover, by daily proof, that these kinds of unkind beverages made the drinkers’ bodies in a great deal worser and more miserable case than stark mad. The Satyrs,

*Poetical
conceits*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Fauns, Dryads, Naiads and Nymphs keep him faithful and simple company.

“He doth not know what Venus doth mean, nor cannot skill of her biformented Son. And if he doth perhaps know her, he perceiveth her beauty to be but base, and little amiable. Now (alas) would it had pleased the Gods that I had likewise never known it and that (keeping simple and plain company) I had lived a rustical and rude life to myself all alone.

“Then should these incurable griefs have been far from me which I now sustain, and my soul, *The pomp of the world like to the wind* together with my most holy name, should not have cared nor desired to see these worldly pomps and feasts, like to the flying winds and vanishing smoke in the air, nor (if it had seen them) should have been so full of anguish and sorrow as now it is. The desire of high and princely towers, of rich and sumptuous houses, of great families, and costly trains, of fair and delicate beds, of shining clothes of gold and silver, of pampered, proud and swift horses, and of a thousand other superfluities of nature, doth never disturb his temperate mind, nor clogs his heart, with burdening and burning care to keep them. Not accompanied nor sought after of wicked men, he doth without fear live in quiet and sequestered places, and, without seeking doubtful rest in high and stately lodgings, doth demand only the open air and light for his repose.

THE FOURTH BOOK

“ And of the manner of his life the wide firmament is a manifest and continual witness. Oh, how much is this life nowadays unknown, and like an enemy eschewed and condemned of everyone, whereas it should be rather, as the dearest and sweetest content, followed and embraced of all. Truly I suppose that the first age of the world lived in this sort, which piecemeal brought forth Gods and men.

“ There is no life (alas) more free, nor more devoid of vice, or better than this : the which our first fathers enjoyed, and with which also he is this day of all others best contented who, abandoning the opulent and vicious Cities, inhabiteth the private and peaceable woods. Oh, what a world had it been if Jupiter had never driven Saturn away, and if the Golden Age had continued still under a chaste law, because we might all live like to our primitive parents of the first world.

“ Alas, whosoever he be that doth this day observe the first and ancient riches, even he (I say) is not inflamed with the blind rage of hapless and helpless Venus as I am, nor he, who hath resolved with himself to dwell in Woods, hills, or dales, was ever subject to any careful kingdom, nor to the wavering wind of the unconstant populace, nor to the suffrages, opinions and censures of the trothless common people, nor the infectious plagues and envious pestilences, nor to the frail favour also of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

blind and inconsiderate Fortune, in all which myself, having put too much trust, love and study, in the midst of the waters (like Tantalus) do die with endless thirst. To little things great rest is afforded, although it be a hard matter without the greater to be able to sustain the life. But he whose thoughts are turmoiled about great things, or doth desire to overrule great matters: the same man *What they are that follow riches* (I say) doth evermore follow the vain honours of fading riches. And high styles and magnificent titles please for the most part false and deceitful men. But he is free from fear and doubt, and cannot discern of the malicious man, swelling in rancour and cankered envy, nor of the backbiter by his venomous tongue and viperous teeth, who dwelleth in the simple and solitary woods and fields; and is also ignorant of the sundry hatreds, and incurable wounds of love, and the abominable sins of the people committed one against another in the Cities; and liveth without fear of breach of laws, and clear of suspicion to be guilty of riots and mutinies, and beateth not his brains to forge feigned tales and to use deceitful words, which are notes to entrap men of pure faith and plain dealing. But the other, while he is aloft, is never without fear or peril, suspecting continually the very same sword that he weareth by his side. Oh, how good a thing it is to resist naked, and lying upon the ground securely to take his sustenance.

THE FOURTH BOOK

Never or seldom at all did capital or great sins enter into little cottages. At the first there was no care taken for gold, nor the holy stone, nor God Terminus, was set a bound or Arbiter to divide fields from fields, and severals from commons. With tall and stout ships they ploughed the unknown waves of the Sea, but everyone did know his proper coasts and banks. Nor with strong piles of timber, with deep ditches, high walls, strong bulwarks and ramparts did they fortify and compass about the sides of their Cities, nor cruel weapons and rusty armour were scoured up and made ready to fight, or borne of warriors in those days, neither had they any Engines, or devilish devices, which (with great pity) might ruinate stone walls, and break Iron gates in pieces.

“And if there was perhaps amongst them any little war, with naked breast and unarmed arm they fought it out, in which the broken boughs of trees and stones served them for their weapons and pellets. Nor the fine and light spear of horn was armed with Iron, nor the stabbing dagger, trenching sword and murdering rapier were girt to any of their backs or side : nor the bushy crest and proud plume of coloured waving feathers did adorn the glittering helmets, and that which in their happy days was the happiest thing of all, was, that Cupid was not yet born, whereby the chaste minds (violated afterwards with his poisoned

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

darts, when he first began to fly with swift wings through the world) might live securely and free from all tormenting thoughts. Ah, I would the Gods had given me to such a world, the people whereof, content with a little, and fearing nothing, followed only their wild and savage appetites.

“ And that of so many great goods and felicities that they enjoyed I had not possessed any other than not to be molested with so grievous love, nor to feel so many smothering sighs, as now I am, and do now feel, then should I have lived a more happy life than now I do in this present age, full of so many *Mutations of ages* poisoned pleasures, unprofitable ornaments and shadowed pomp. Alas, that the wicked fury of gain and avarice, that headlong and enraged wrath, and that those minds, which of themselves kindled loathsome lust, and violated these first bonds, so holy and easy to be kept (given of Nature herself to her people), and that the thirst after rule (a bloody Sun) came now in place, and that the weaker became a prey to the greater and more mighty ! Sardanapalus came now in, and first of all made Venus (though of Semiramis it was made more dissolute) more dainty and delicate, and then to Bacchus and Ceres prescribed new orders and customs never known of them before.

“ Then came in also warlike Mars, who found out new sleights and a thousand mortal ways to death. And then all the world began to be contaminated

THE FOURTH BOOK

with black gore, and the Sea to be tainted with red rivers of blood running into it. Then most wicked crimes entered into everyone his house, and in brief there was no great or detestable sin perpetrated without some former and foul example before. Brother killed brother, the father the son, and the son the father. The husband lay slain for the fault, and many times by the proper fact, of his wife. And wicked mothers destroyed daily their own fruit. The infinite cruelty and endless envy of stepdames, which continually, secretly or openly, they bear to their husbands' children, I need not to allege, because their effects are manifestly seen at all times and places.

“ Riches therefore brought Pride, Avarice, Lechery, Wrath, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth, and every other vice, with them. And with these afore-
Love the
worker of
all mischief said Fiends the Captain and worker of all mischief, and the only artificer of all sins, entered also (dissolute and unbridled Love I mean), by whose continual sieges, laid to miserable minds, infinite Cities, ruined and burnt, do yet smoke, and for whom all nations have made mortal uproars, and do yet broil in the lamentable and endless wars.

“ And the overwhelmed and drowned kingdoms by his cruel tyranny do yet oppress many people. And concealing all his other execrable effects, let those only which he useth towards me suffice for

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

a manifest example of his merciless mischief and cruelty, which do so sharply environ me on every side that I cannot turn my mind to no other thing, but only to the grievous objects of his immanity."

Discoursing thus with myself, sometimes I thought that that which I did was wicked in the sight of the just Gods, and that my pains were annoyous to me without compare.

But many greater offences committed in times past, and daily practised by others, made me (in respect of them) seem but innocent, and the consideration of those pains which others endured (although I believed that none passed the like grief as I did, seeing myself not to be the first, nor one alone) did so work in my understanding that I became the stronger to suffer my own: the which I pray the Gods determine with hasty death, or else drive them away with Panphilus his speedy return. Thus therefore pitiless Fortune, for this kind of life, or rather for a worse than this, hath left me but small comfort, as you (pitiful Ladies) have heard.

Which consolation understand it not such, that it was able to make me forget my sorrow (as others commonly are wont to do), for this did but only stop my tears (ready to fall out of mine eyes), and did sometimes indeed dissolve my sighs into nothing, without affording me nevertheless any other benefit. Prosecuting therefore the pitiful history of my

THE FOURTH BOOK

painful life, I say, that heretofore, with many other young gentlewomen, adorned with singular beauty, I was never wont to omit any great feast in our City, or which was celebrated in our divine temples : the which solemnities, feasts and triumphs without my presence the company did account but little worth, and thought them less beautified. Which times appointed for them my waiting-women, duly knowing to be at hand, were very diligent to solicit and put me in mind of them, and others of my maids also, observing their old order in laying forth, and making ready my noble garments, sometimes said to me : “ With what gown may it please you (good Madam) to adorn yourself? For the solemnity of such a feast is to be celebrated this day in the temple, which doth attend your coming for the only beautifying and accomplishment of it.” To whom (alas) I remember that sometimes with an angry *A troubled* voice and austere countenance (turning *mind careth* furiously to them again, no otherwise than *not to go* a tusky Bear doth to a company of barking Curs) I answered, saying : “ Pack hence, the vilest part of my house, and carry away these ornaments from my sight. A simple and poor garment is most fit to cover this miserable body, nor let not me hear you any more talk of temples, feasts and solemnities, if you esteem of my favour at all. Oh, how many times did I yet perceive well enough that those temples were visited of many noble

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

personages who came thither rather to see me than for any great devotions, and not espying me there, grieved as it were in mind, went from thence again, generally affirming that the feast was dishonoured, and not to be called a feast without my presence there. But although that I refrained thus from them, yet sometimes, entreated and constrained, I must needs, in company of other noble Ladies my acquaintance and companions, go to them: with whom (but simply appavelled in my ordinary holiday attire) unwillingly (the Gods know) I went thither.

And there did not look for any solemn and high place (as I was wont to do), but refusing the honours offered unto me, I humbly betook myself to the lowest places, amongst other gentlewomen of meaner calling and degree. And there harkening to many speeches, sometimes of one and sometimes of another, with secret grief (as well as I could) I passed away the time that I stayed there. How many times (alas) did I hear them that sat nearest unto me talk of me, saying :

“ Oh, what a great marvel is it to see this young Gentlewoman (the singular ornament of our City) become now of late of so demiss and abject a mind ! What divine spirit hath inspired her ? Where are her noble robes ? Where are her high and stately countenances ? And whither are her rare and surpassing beauties fled ? ” To which words (if lawfully I might) I would have answered : “ All these things,

THE FOURTH BOOK

with many other more (dearer to me than these), Panphilus (ah, my injurious Panphilus) hath carried away with him." And compassed about there with many Gentlewomen, and importunately urged with many questions, with a feigned cheer and countenance of necessity I must satisfy them all. But one of the Gentlewomen amongst the rest, with these stinging words began to mock me, saying: "Thou makest me (Lady Fiammetta), and many other Gentlewomen more, never cease to marvel at thee, not knowing what sudden occasion hath moved thee to forsake thy rich attire, thy Jewels, gems and ornaments, and many other things, so commendable and beseeeming thy young years, and which (we know) were once most precious unto thee. Being yet but in the flourishing prime of thy age, thou shouldest not put on this grave apparel and these uncouth Habits.

"Dost thou think, that letting thy youthful time pass, thou canst call it back again? Use thy years *Years ought to be used according to their quality* therefore according to their properties and nature. This homely and honest clothing which thou hast put on may perhaps hereafter serve thy turn better. And as thou seest here every one of us (elder and graver than thyself) with curious and skilful hand adorned, and with honourable and costly garments attired, with such oughtest thou (Fiammetta) to be set forth and beautified."

To her, and to many other also, expecting what I

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

would say, with an humble and low voice I made this answer :

“Gentlewoman, and you the rest of my friends, we come to these holy places, either to please the Gods, or else to please men. If to please the Gods, the mind adorned with virtue is sufficient, and it doth not import whether the body be clothed with silk or sackcloth. If to please men, forasmuch as most of them are blinded with false opinions, and by the exterior parts and lineaments of the body conjecture the inward disposition of the mind, I confess that the apparel used sometimes of me, and now of you, is very requisite. But this is now my least care, my chiefest desire consisting rather in a sorrowful repentance of my past vanities, which being most willing to amend in the sight of Gods and men, by this apparel, and in other things else, I make myself (as much as I can) contemptible to the world, and displeasing to your nice eyes.”

At which words the tears of inward truth, violently expressed forth, bathed my sorrowful visage, and therefore thus I began to say softly to myself: “O ye pitiful Gods, the searchers of all our hearts, let not these untrue words (uttered by my lying tongue) be imputed to me for a sin, which (not of a malicious will, and flat hypocrisy to deceive them, but of mere necessity to dissemble my grief, and cover the cause of it from them) I was constrained to use as a holy and godly excuse. But

THE FOURTH BOOK

let them rather be meritorious unto me, since that in concealing from thy people an evil and scandalous example, in lieu thereof, by these feigned words, I gave them a good president and pattern of better life. It is a great grief (you know) for me to tell a lie, and with what an impatient and troubled mind I tell this forced and forged tale you know too well, and I can do no more."

Oh, how many times (fair Ladies) for this iniquity have I received pitiful prayers of the Gentlewomen

*How hard
a thing it
is to judge
of another's
holiness* sitting about me, saying, that of a most vain woman I was become a most devout convertite. Truly I understood, many times,

that there were some of them of this opinion, that I was so highly in the Gods' favour that there was nothing that I could crave at their hands but I might easily obtain the same of them. And therefore I was many times visited of holy women, for a zealous and devout one also, they being (poor souls) as much deceived in that which with my sorrowful and subtle countenance I did hide my mind, as ignorant how discrepant my fervent desires and my feigned devotions were. O deceitful world, how much can counterfeit looks prevail in thee more than just and well-meaning minds, if that their works be hidden and secret.

Myself a greater sinner than any other, and sorrowful for my dishonest loves, yet couching them under the Veil of honest words, am reputed holy :

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

but the just Gods know that (if I could without danger of my honour and good name) with true reports I would make satisfaction to everyone whom in fictions, speeches and gesture I have deluded, and would not hide the headspring from whence such streams of tears did flow, nor the course from whence the effects of my sorrowful life are derived. But (alas) it may not be.

When I had answered her who first demanded of me the cause of my melancholy, another sitting next unto me, seeing my tears almost dried up, said : “ Gracious Fiammetta, whither is the shining beauty of thy fair face gone, and how is the lively colour of thy rosy cheeks extinct ? What is the cause of thy pale and wan

visage ? Thy twinkling eyes, like to morning stars, are dimmed now with blue and purple circles that compass them about, and are so deeply sunk into thy brows that scarcely they may be discerned in thy forehead. Thy golden tresses, once so bravely adorned with curious hand heretofore, why now tied up diffusedly, and scarcely are they seen ? Tell me, Fiammetta. For thou makest me to marvel without end.” And her I answered in few words thus : “ It is a manifest thing that human beauty

is but a fading flower, and that every day and hour it waxeth less and less, which (if it hath any trust

THE FOURTH BOOK

in itself) at length doth perceive itself to be but nothing, and to lie miserably prostrate. He that gave it me (submitting me the occasion of expelling it again) with a dull pace hath taken it from me, possibly (perhaps) to restore to me again, whensoever it shall please him." And this being said, not able to withhold my tears, shrouded under my mantle I shed them abundantly. And with these words I lamented with myself, saying :

“ O beauty, the uncertain Jewel of mortal men, and the gift of a little time, which doth both come and go sooner away than the pleasant Meadows depainted with many flowers in the sweetest seasons of gladsome springtide, and the verdure of high Trees apparelled with sundry leaves, which are no sooner for a little time adorned with the virtue of Aries but immediately, with the hot exhalations and vapours of parching Summer, are consumed and taken away again. And if perhaps the burning season doth leave any of them untouched, Autumn doth not spare to leave them naked and bare. Even so thou, beauty, most often in the midst of thy prime and best years, injured by many accidents, dost perish, which if perhaps they be pardoned thee in youth, the riper age (though with all thy force and means thou dost oppose to preserve the same) doth take it quite away. O beauty, thou art but a flying and inconstant thing, and not unlike to the waters, which never return more to their first fountains :

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and no hope in changing and brittle goods, and therefore less affiance, should be put.

“Alas, how did I once love thee, and how dear wert thou to me (miserable woman), and with what care wert thou nourished and kept of me ! But now (and deservedly) I curse thee, beauty. For thou art the first occasion of my lost liberty, the first entrapper of my dear Panphilus his soul ; enjoying him, hast not sufficient force to keep him still. And he being now gone, hast not the power or virtue to call him back again. If thou hadst not been, I had not seemed pleasant to Panphilus his lovely eyes, and not having pleased them, he should have never sought to allure mine, and not enticing and pleasing them, as he did, I should not now sustain these pains of mind. Thou art therefore the only occasion and beginning of all my hurt. Oh, thrice happy are those Women who, without thee, suffer the rebukeful checks of rude and rustical behaviour, and are condemned for their foul and ill-favoured hue, because they (observing Diana’s chaste and holy laws, and seldom troubled with pricking motions, as well devoid of peevish passions of their own parts as not fearing the forcible assaults of fond suitors) may live with their souls free from the cruel signory and tyranny of love. But thou, the only occasion of receiving continual molestation by them who never leave to gape on us, dost (by their importunacy) of force entice us to break that

THE FOURTH BOOK

which we should most dearly observe. O happy Spurina, and worthy of eternal memory, who (knowing thy effects and unlawful affections) in the flower of her youth, with cruel hand did kill thee in her breast, rather choosing to be of the wiser beloved for her virtuous act than of wanton youths for her concupiscible beauty. Alas, if I had done so, all these griefs, all these thoughts, and these tears should have never thus molested my tender heart, and my now corrupted life should have yet remained within the compass of her first laudable bonds."

Hereat the Gentlewomen pulled me again, and blamed my superfluous tears, saying: "O Fiammetta, what misery is this? Dost thou despair of the mercy of the Gods? Dost thou not believe that they do pitifully forgive the greatest offences without shedding of so many tears? This course which thou dost take in hand is rather the way to seek thy own death than pardon for thy faults. Rise up therefore and wipe thy face, and behold the sacrifice which the sacred Ministers of Jupiter are carrying to offer up to his mighty Godhead."

At these words (stopping my tears) I lifted up my head, which now I did not cast round about (as I was wont to do), assuredly knowing that my Panphilus was not there, nor to see if any other, or of whom I was beheld, or if the standers-by gazed on my apparel, and ornaments, as they were wont to

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

do, but rather wholly intent, and relying upon the favour of the supernal Gods, to pour forth some pitiful prayers for my Panphilus, and for his happy return, calling upon them with these words, I said :

“ O most gracious governors of high Heaven, and

The end of general Judges of all the world, set now

one sorrow some stint and measure to my grievous

is the pains, and prescribe an end to all my

beginning sorrows. You see I have not one merry

of another hour, nor quiet day, since that in continued course

the end of one sorrow is the beginning of another.

But that sometimes I accounted myself happy, not knowing my miseries to ensue. First with vain

labour to beautify my young and unripened years

more than was requisite (sufficiently adorned of

nature itself), having unwittingly offended you, for

penance and satisfaction of such faults ye have of

indissoluble and cruel love, which doth at this very

instant torment me, made me a miserable thrall and

captive. And you have afterwards filled my mind

(not accustomed to troubles and sorrows) by means

of it, with new avoiding cares. And lastly have

divided him from me, whom I love more than my-

self : whereupon infinite perils are grown one after

another in prejudice of my poor life. But if the

prayers of miserable creatures sometimes penetrate

your divine ears, then pitifully incline them to my

petitions, and, not regarding the multitude of the

faults which I have committed against you, let that

THE FOURTH BOOK

little good (if ever I did any) be bountifully considered of you, and in guerdon of it favourably give ear to my jealous orisons, and grant my earnest requests, which as they are but easy for you to perform, so may you (by not denying me the same) give me most great content, and make me happy again. Alas, how well do I know that this prayer in the sight of you (most just Judges) is very unjust : but it must (needs) proceed from your justice that, of two evils, to wish the less and to prevent the greater is the safest and best counsel. To you therefore, from whom nothing is hid, it is manifest, that my beloved Panphilus by no means can slide out of my mind, nor those passed accidents out of my memory, the remembrance of whom, and of which, doth many times with griping griefs bring me to such a point that (to be rid of them) I have oftsoons desired a thousand manners, and sought as many means, of death, all which that little hope which remaineth for me in you hath forcibly taken out of my hands. If it be therefore a lesser evil to keep my Lover still, as I have done, than to destroy my wicked soul with my massacred body (as I believe it is), let him return, and be restored to me again. Let living sinners be dearer to you, and possible to return to you again, than the dead dying in their sin, and without hope of redemption. And vouchsafe rather to leese a part of your creature than the whole, which you have created. And if

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

this be too great, and too much to be granted, let that which is the last end of all miseries, before *Miserable creatures require death* that with deliberate and voluntary counsel (constrained with greater griefs) I take it of myself, be granted to me. Let my words come before your sight, whom, if they cannot move to pity, then you other Gods dwelling in the celestial regions, if there be any of you there who, sometimes living here beneath, have had trial of that amorous fire which I feel, receive them, and offer them up to those higher powers, who will not take them uttered by my unworthy mouth, so that, obtaining grace for me, I may first live here joyfully, and after the end of my days enjoy part of your glorious fruition, and before time, to show sinners that it is a good and convenient thing for one sinner to pardon and help another."

These words having been spoken, I did put sweet odours and incense upon their Altars, with many other rich offerings, to make them more willing and ready to bend down their ears to my prayers and for Panphilus his help. Which ceremonies, after they were ended, departing from thence, with the rest of the Gentlewomen, I returned to my sorrowful lodging again.

THE FIFTH BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA



S by those things which I have spoken of before, you may presume, even so (pitiful Ladies) hath my loathed life been assaulted in the cruel battles of Love, and yet is tossed every day upon more sharp and mortal pikes of jealousy. The which certes (considering my future estate) might justly be thought a pleasant peace and pastime. Myself also being stricken with fear (when it came to my remembrance), with fear (I say) of that, to the which point it did last of all transport me, and which doth yet almost possess me, to make the more delay to come to it, because I was ashamed of my own fury, and because in writing of it methought I re-entered into it again, deducting therefore my discourse in length, with a slow hand I have written and published those things unto you which were less grievous unto me : but being not able now to avoid these, nor to fly to them any more, the order of my narration drawing me on, I will (though fearfully) come unto it. But thou most holy pity, dwelling in the tender breasts of delicate young Gentlewomen, govern thy reins in them with a stronger hand than thou hast done

THE FIFTH BOOK

hitherto, because in discurring this my doleful narration, and giving thee a great deal more scope than is precisely convenient, I might not (perhaps) turn thee into the contrary of that which I do seek and hope for, and so might take as it were, from the laps of these Ladies and Gentlewomen that read thee, their flowing and falling tears. The Sun was now turned another time into that part of the Heavens where the presumptuous Son was set on fire, when so rashly he guided his father's Chariot, after that Panphilus departed from me. And I, miserable woman, had now by long use learned to

When Fortune doth begin to show herself contrary, then she goes increasing ever her spite suffer accustomed griefs, and I lamented more temperately with myself than I was wont to do, and believed that there were no more woes left for me to sustain than those which I had already endured, when envious Fortune, not content with my past miseries, did suddenly show me that she had yet more bitter poison to infect my afflicted soul withal.

It came therefore to pass that one of my dearest servants returned from Panphilus his country hither, who was of all that knew him, but especially of me, most joyfully welcomed. And telling of his own adventures and travels, and of those things which he had seen, intermingling better with worse, bechance he remembered himself at last to speak of Panphilus, of whose praises dilating very much

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

(remembering the courtesies that he had sometimes done him), made me most contented, and plied my willing ears to his tale. And shamefast reason and womanly modesty did scarce bridle my eager will from running to embrace him, and to inquire of my Panphilus with an extraordinary kind of appassionate affection, as at that very present I felt. But yet staying myself, and he being also demanded of many concerning his estate, and having answered everyone well, I only asked him, with a merry countenance, how he employed himself and spent his time there, and if his mind was happily bent to return again. To which demands he answered thus :

“ To what purpose (my good Lady) should Panphilus come again ? There is not a fairer Gentlewoman in all his country (which above all other Cities doth bring forth Goddesses for beauty) than she who most entirely loveth him, and by as much as I could understand of others (and as I verily believe) is dearly beloved of him again, otherwise I would account him but a fool, whereas heretofore I ever judged him to be wise.”

My heart was so turned at these words as C  none’s was, sitting on the high hills of Ida, and seeing her lover come sailing homewards with the new Grecian Lady in the Trojan Ship : which thing I could scarce hide in my countenance, although very hardly I did the same : but yet with a dissembled and faint laughter I said unto him : “ Certes, thou sayest even

THE FIFTH BOOK

true : for we could not imagine in this country any one gentlewoman so different from his dainty liking, whom we might deem worthy of his love, so high was his inestimable virtue, so rare were his laudable qualities, and so many his good graces. But if he hath found out anyone there, he doth both well and wisely in staying with her there. But tell me, with what mind doth he brook his new wife ? ” He then answered : “ He hath no wife ; for she that came to his house (as I told not long since) true it is that she came, not to him but to his father.” Whilst

Jealousy is of all others the worst he spake these bitter words, which so earnestly I listened unto, passing out of one anguish into another anxiety a great deal

worse, pricked moreover with sudden anger and grief of mind, my sorrowful heart began so to pant and beat, as the swift wings of Procne, when she begins to take her strongest flight, do beat against the white Sea banks and shores.

And my fearful spirits began no otherwise to tremble throughout every part of my body than the superficial and uppermost part of the Sea, with the gentle breathing of some calm wind descended upon it, is commonly wont to do, or the bending reeds scarcely shaken of some pleasant and soft air, and I began to feel my strength by little and little decay. Wherefore getting myself (as conveniently as I could) from thence, I went into my Chamber, because none might perceive the violent

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

issue of my sudden grief. And being now gone out of the presence of everyone, I came no sooner into it but I began to pour out of mine eyes such plenty of tears as a swelling vein or fountain of water, bursting and gushing out, when it overfloweth the valleys, and I could scarce hold my troubled tongue from loud exclamations, and my hoarse voice from piteous lamentations, but casting myself (nay, rather falling) flat upon my miserable bed (the wicked witness of our loves) I would have cried out aloud, and said :

“ O Panphilus, why hast thou betrayed me ? ”

But my words were broken in the very midst, so suddenly were the vigour and forces taken from my tongue, and from the other parts of my body. And there I lay a good while, as one dead (nay, verily thought to be dead indeed) carefully watched, and giving no small wonder to everyone there, by this sudden trance (no skill of Physic, or secrecy of any art, being able to make my erring life return to her former place again).

But after that my sorrowful soul, which in lamenting had many times embraced the miserable spirits of my body to depart, did yet stay itself in the same, and recalling her forces again together, which were almost dissolved and fled away, my eyes received again their light, which for a good space they had lost.

And lifting up my head I saw many Gentlewomen

THE FIFTH BOOK

and others about me, who with their loving and pitiful services, bewailing my sudden swoon, had with most precious and sweet waters all bedewed me, and with many other instruments in their hands, and which I did see lying before me, labouring to regain my lost life. Whereupon, I marvelled no less at those waters, preserves and glasses that were about me than at the great lamentations of all the gentlewomen there.

And after that I had recovered my speech again, I demanded what was the cause of their assembly about me, and of all those things there. And one of them answered, and said :

“ These things (good Lady) were brought hither (and for no other purpose we also came) to reduce thy fugitive soul into thy cold body again.” Then after a great sigh, and faint spirit, I said : “ Alas, good Gentlewoman, with what friendly office of pity (working rather a most cruel function, and repugnant to my will) do you think to have done me a thankful piece of service, whereas you have procured my great pain, and done me the worst turn as ever I had, in forcible retaining of my soul in me still, which was so well disposed, and so willing, to have left the most miserable body that liveth. Alas, it is enough that there was never anything which with like affection was desired of me, or of anybody else, which you have denied me. My soul, already dissolved from these pains and tribulations,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

had been nearly arrived to the wished haven of my desires, but you have hindered it her passage."

After these words, the Gentlewomen comforted me with divers good speeches, but they spent

*Miserable
men desire
to be alone
to burst out
their inward
grief in
lamentation* both words and wind in vain. I feigned, notwithstanding, to be of better cheer, and alleged new occasions of this miserable accident, because, when they were gone, I might have full scope to burst out my great and swelling grief. And after

that some of them were departed, and the rest had taken their leave, myself beginning to show a merry countenance, and to dissemble my sorrow, I remained accompanied there only with my old Nurse and with my faithful maid, who had all this time been privy to my long complaints, and a procurer of my momentary pleasure, both which dutifully ministered comfortable salves to my unfeigned sores, possible enough to have healed them had they not been mortal. But I, thinking only of those unlucky tidings which I had heard, to one of you, Gentlewomen (to which I know not), I suddenly became an open enemy, and I began to revolve great and grievous matters in my perplexed mind. And that amassed lump of grief, which could not altogether contain itself in my breast, with a furious and despiteful voice I did in this sort partly drive out of me, saying :

"O wicked and false young man! O enemy to

THE FIFTH BOOK

pity, and pitiless wretch ! O Panphilus, the worst of all those who without desert doth breathe this common air ! Disloyal Panphilus, who having blotted me (most miserable woman) out of thy ungrateful memory dost now dwell and delight thyself with thy new deceitful dame ! Accursed be that hapless day when first I saw thee, and that fatal hour, and very instant, in which thou didst please my simple eyes. Accursed be that Goddess which, appearing to me, with her allured promises flattered my wavering mind, and disturbed the same (though resisting with all her forces to the contrary) from the bounds of my right judgment, to like of thee (wicked wretch) and (ungrateful monster) to love thee.

“ Certes, I think that she was not Venus, but rather some infernal fury in her shape, striking me with madness and filling me with frantic fury, as once she did miserable Atamas. O most cruel youth, whom amongst many other most noble, beautiful and valiant young Gentlemen I did fondly choose out for the best, where are now thy serious prayers, which for safety of thy life with tears thou didst oftentimes offer unto me, affirming that both that and thy death were in my hands ? Where are now thy pitiful looks, and those two never-dried eyes, with the which (malicious man) thou didst never cease at thy pleasure to shed forth tears in my presence ? Where is now the great love, that so

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

bravely thou didst feign to show me? Where are thy sweet words, and thy sore griefs, thy infinite sorrows, thy pains and travails proffered and employed in my service? Are all these fled out of thy memory, or hast thou framed them anew to entrap thy deceived and new lover?

“Accursed be that pity of mine, which took that life out of death his mouth, that (thereby making herself then a joyful woman) should have rather sent it to the darksome den of death. Now those eyes, which whilom in my presence lamented, laugh before their new Mistress, and that mutable heart hath turned all his sweet words and fair offers to her only, and now hast thou heretically dedicated all thy services to her devotions.

“Alas, Panphilus, where are now those profaned and perjured Godheads? Where is thy promised faith? Where are thy infinite tears, of the which (miserable woman) I drunk no small quantity, believing them to be tempered then with as great pity and love as now they are turned but to drops of treacherous deceit? All those placed in the bosom of thy new Mistress thou hast with thyself taken from me. Alas, how great a corsive was it to my poor heart, when once before I heard that by Juno’s law thou wert combined to another woman! But perceiving that the covenants in which thou didst bind thyself to me were not to be preferred before them (although I did painfully

THE FIFTH BOOK

bear it), yet overcome with just grief, I did with less anguish of mind endure it. But now understanding that by the selfsame laws by the which thou wert bound to me thou hast (in casting me off) given thyself to another, it is an intolerable pain for me to sustain. But now I know the cause of thy stay, and openly perceive my own simplicity, with the which I ever believed that thou wouldest (if possible) have once returned again. Alas, Panphilus, didst thou stand in need of so many guileful arts and cunning fetches to delude me? Why didst thou so often, so solemnly and so highly swear unto me, with continual asseveration of thy most entire and sincere faith, if thou didst think thus to deceive me? Wherefore didst not thou go away without taking thy leave, or without making any promise of thy return? I did (as thou knowest) most fervently love thee, and thou wert not then so much entangled in my love, and wert not so straitly my prisoner, but at thy will (as to my no small pain I now perceive thou hast done), and without wasting such infinite and vain tears, thou mightest have departed from me. If thou hadst done thus, then I should without doubt have suddenly despaired of thy return, manifestly knowing thy deceit, and then with death ere this time, or else with just oblivion, my torments should have been concluded. But because they might be

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

the more prolonged in giving me a little vain hope, thou hast continued and nourished them still. But I, poor soul, never deserved this at thy wicked hands. Alas, how sweet were thy false tears to me ; but now (knowing their vile effects) I feel them to be most bitter to my dying mind. Alas, if love did so strongly rule in thee, as he doth fiercely use his might and signory in me, tell me then, if it was not sufficient for thee to be once captivated, but that the second time thou must fall into his forces again ? But what do I talk of love ? For thou didst never love, but hast rather delighted to jest with young gentlewomen, and hast made it but a sport to deceive with thy subtlety their simplicity. If thou hadst loved (as I did believe thou didst) thou shouldest yet have been mine own. And whose couldest thou have been that had loved thee more than I ? Alas, what dame soever thou be that hast taken him from me, though thou art my mortal and only enemy, yet, feeling the great grief which his falsehood hath engendered in my breast, I must needs take pity on thee. Wherefore I warn thee to *He that de-* take heed of his deceits, because he that *ceiveth once* hath once deceived hath for ever after *deceiveth* lost his honesty and shame, and doth make *ever* it no matter of conscience to deceive everyone from thenceforth.

“Alas, wicked youth, how many orisons and sacrifices have I offered up to the Gods for thy

THE FIFTH BOOK

safety, and now thou must fly from me, to go to another. O Gods, my prayers (I perceive) are heard but to the profit of another woman.

“ I have the sorrow, and another sucks the sweet. I reap but dole and pain for my long devotions, and another delight and pleasure of him who in right and equity should be mine.

“ Ah, wicked man, was not my beauty correspondent to thy bravery, my doings to thy desires, and my nobility to thy Gentility? Alas, a great deal more! Were my riches ever denied thee, or did I take any of thine? Ah, never. Did I ever in deed or demonstration love any man besides thyself? And (unless thy new love make thee digress too far from the truth) thou wilt confess and say no. What fault of mine therefore, what just occasion of thy part, what greater beauty, or more fervent love have taken thee from me, and given thee to another? Truly none. And all the Gods be my records herein, that I never wrought anything against thee but that (beyond all terms of reason) I loved thee. And if this hath deserved such treachery as thou hast done, and workest against me, let thy own self (disloyal as thou art) be judge. O ye Gods, the just revengers of our unjust defects, I call upon you for cruel and due vengeance. I neither wish, nor go about to practise his death, who by his vile escape from me would have wrought mine. Nor do I pray that any other punishment may befall to his deserved

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

guilt, but, if he love his new choice as I love him, that in casting him off, and giving herself to another (as he hath taken himself from me), she would leave him in that kind of life that (cruel as he is) he causeth me to lead." And so, with unseemly motions of my body, turning me now this way, now that way, like a frantic woman I tumbled and tossed up and down in my bed.

All that day was not spent in other speeches than in such of like tenour, and in most bitter wailings. But the night, worser than the day, and more apt for all kinds of sorrow (the melancholy darkness being more conformable to meditating miseries than the light), being now stolen on, it came to pass that, being indeed with my dear husband, and lying a great while silent to myself, and broad waking, yet warring within myself with hosts of dolorous thoughts, amongst which, calling to memory all my passed times, as well my pleasant occurrences as sorrowful passages, and especially that I had lost my Panphilus by means of a new love, my grief grew in such abundance that, unable to keep it any longer within, with great lamentations and doleful complaints I burst it out, albeit concealing the amorous occasion of it. And my sighs were so forcible, and my sobs so profound, that my Husband (being now a good while drowned in deep sleep) by the great noise and molestation of them was awaked, and turning himself to me, who was sponged in

THE FIFTH BOOK

mine own tears, and taking me lovingly in his arms, with mild and pitiful words he said thus unto me :

“ O my sweet soul, what sinister cause of so doleful a plaint in the quiet night, when thou shouldst take thy rest, doth trouble thee thus ? What thing is it that this long time hath made thee so melancholic and sad ? Nothing must be concealed from me that may any way displease or discontent thee. Is there anything that thy heart doth desire, and that my wit and substance may compass for thee, or that in demanding of it thou mightest possibly have ? Art not thou my only comfort, my joy and my good ? And dost not thou know that I love thee above all worldly thoughts, yea, more than myself. Whereof not by show, nor one proof, but by daily experience, thou mayest live assured. Wherefore dost thou therefore lament in such sort ? Wherefore dost thou afflict thyself in such extreme grief ? Do I seem unpleasant, ill favoured or nothing gracious in thine eyes, or am I unworthy of thy beauty, or is not my birth, parentage and estate agreeable to thy nobility, or dost thou think me culpable in anything that I may amend ? Speak, and tell me frankly, and discover to me the vale of thy desires. There shall be nothing left undone, or unattempted, for thy sake, if it may possible be. Thou dost (altered in visage and apparel, and ex-

*The love
of a good
husband*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

tremely sorrowful in all thy actions) minister a doleful occasion and matter to me of an unquiet life. And though I have before seen thee continually sad and pensive, yet this day more than at any time. I thought of late that some bodily infirmity was the cause of thy paleness, but now I do manifestly know that it is grief of mind that hath brought thee to this pitiful case wherein I see thee, wherefore I pray thee disclose to me the root from whence all thy sorrows do grow."

Whom with a feminine and sudden wit, taking counsel of feigned tales and lies, which before had served me for a shift, I answered thus :

" O sweet Husband, dearer to me than all the world besides, I lack not anything wherein thy forward help may avail me, and acknowledge thee (without all doubt) more worthy than myself; but the death of my dear Brother, of which thou art not ignorant, hath long before, and now since, brought me to this extreme sorrow. Which, as often as I think of it, with bitter wailings doth rend my heart in pieces. And certes I bewail not so much his cruel death, a thing naturally incident to us all, but the strange and pitiful manner of the same : which thou didst know to be violent, infortunate and bloody. And besides this, the strange things, and ugly sights, that appeared to me after his death do kill my fearful soul to think of. I can never so little

*Sometimes
the manner
of one's death
is more
lamented
than the
death itself*

THE FIFTH BOOK

shut up mine eyelids, or give any slender sleep to my sorrowful eyes, but immediately, all pale, trembling, naked and full of gore, showing me his cruel wounds, he appeareth quaking before me. And even then, when thou didst perceive me to weep and lament, he came into the Chamber, standing and staring before me as I was asleep, in likeness of a horrible and fainting ghost, fearfully quaking with a breathless and panting breast, in such sort that he could scarce utter one word, but at the last, with extreme pain, said : ‘ O my dear Sister, wipe that blot of ignominy from me which, with an appalled and troubled face, looking ever for very grief and shame thereof on the ground, doth make my sorrowful ghost wander, with great disgrace and scorn, amongst other hapless sprites.’ And although it was some comfort for me to see him, yet overcome with terror, which I had of his dreadful habit, and moved with just compassion of his words, with starting on a sudden, I awaked out of my feeble sleep, and thus my tears (the which thou dost now go about to comfort) fulfilling the duty of my conceived pity, did at hand follow. And so (as the Gods know), if weapons were fit for Women, I would ere this have revenged his miserable death, and with a fierce countenance and courageous heart sent the greedy glutton of his innocent blood amongst other damned souls. But alas, I can do no more than I am able. Therefore (dear Husband) not without great

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

occasion I am thus miserably tormented in mind." Oh, with how many pitiful words did he then comfort me, applying a salve to the wound which was healed long enough before, and how did he endeavour to mollify and diminish my complaints with those true reasons, which for feigned tales he so carefully made.

But after he thought that he had comforted me up a little he fell asleep again, and then I (thinking
*Prayers of
a desperate
lover* of the pitiful and tender love he bare me), with more cruel grief secretly bewailing my unjust requital of the same, began again my interrupted and piecemeal lamentations, saying: "O most cruel Dens inhabited of savage and wild beasts, O hell, the eternal prison ordained for wicked company, O any other exile whatsoever deeper than those, open and swallow me up, and with just pains torment my sinful and deserved soul, and plague me, of all others the vilest Woman.

"O mighty Jupiter, most justly angry with me, tumble down thy thunder, and with swift hand throw down thy crushing bolts upon my hateful head. O holy Juno, whose most holy laws (thrice wicked Woman) I have infringed, take vengeance of me now. O ye fierce Caspian Serpents, tear in pieces this polluted body of mine. O ye hellish Ravens, infernal Harpies and cruel beasts, devour and entomb me in your greedy maws. And you most fierce and unruly Jades, the cruel quarterers of Hippolitus his innocent members, rend me, impious and trothless

THE FIFTH BOOK

Woman, in a thousand pieces. And thou, most pitiful Husband, sheathe thy revenging sword with due anger in my culpable breast, and with plenteous effusion of my blood send forth my wicked soul, that hath so unworthily deceived thee. Use no remorse of pity, love nor moderate mercy towards me, since that I have preferred the love of a stranger, and of a perfidious Imp, before the bound faith and due reverence which I owe to thy holy and unspotted bed. O the worst of all womankind, most worthy of great punishment for this and for many other things, what fury appeared before thy chaste eyes that day when Panphilus first pleased thee? Where didst thou abandon that love and piety which was due to the holy Laws of matrimony? Whither didst thou banish thy reverend chastity (the chiefest honour and ornament of women) when, for the blind liking of disloyal Panphilus, thou didst forsake the love of thy loving Husband? Where is now the pity that thy beloved youth doth show thee? And where are the comforts that he should now give thee in thy perplexed miseries? Lulled in the lap of another Woman, he merrily passeth away the weary time, and doth not care for thee, and yet in truth he hath reason therefor. Wherefore it must worthily fall so to thee as to all others which embrace licentious lust, neglecting lawful love. Thy injured Husband, who with rigour should punish thee, with great pity goeth about to comfort thee,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and he that should perform this just function careth not (alas) wrongfully to torment thee. What, is not he as fair as Panphilus ? And are not his virtues, courage, nobility, and especially his love and constancy, and all other good parts in him, are they not far above all and everything that Panphilus hath in him worthy of praise and commendation ? Ah, there is no doubt thereof. Wherefore then didst thou forsake him for another ? What blindness, rashness, sin, and what iniquity, hath brought thee to this ? Alas, poor soul, I know not.

“Only that those things which are frankly and freely possessed are wont to be accounted of no *Things* price and value, although they be (indeed) *freely possessed are* very dear and precious. And that those *esteemed of* which hardly, and with hazard, are gotten *slightly* (be they never so vile) are esteemed and embraced as most singular and sweet things.

“The daily fruition and glutting company of my Husband, which should by great reason have been most dear unto me, surfeited my queasy mind, and so (satiating my changeable appetite) deceived me. And I (mighty enough (perhaps) to have resisted) do now miserably lament and bewail that which I have left undone : nay rather I was without (perhaps) strong enough, if I would myself, if I had called to mind those signs, and thought of that, which the Gods, in sleeping and waking, had shown me the night and day before my hapless fall. But

THE FIFTH BOOK

now not able to retire (though I would), but constrained by my appointed stars to combat still in these amorous conflicts, I knew too well what the Serpent was which stung me under my left side, and swelling with my sucked blood went away. And likewise I see the events that the prognosticating flower of my crown falling from my adorned head doth manifestly declare. But alas, this vain wisdom and aftersight cometh all too late.

“The Gods (perhaps) to purge themselves of some conceived wrath against me, and repenting that they had showed me any signs, took the knowledge of their future effects from me, not being able to restore them to me again, as Apollo from his beloved Cassandra, to whom, after he had granted a boon of a Prophetical spirit, did take the virtue and effect of it, in that she was not believed of any whensoever she divined. Whereupon placed in the midst of all miseries, not without great reason and just cause, I bewail and consume my life in woe.”

And sorrowing thus with myself, and turning and tumbling myself in my weary bed almost all the night, I passed it away, without giving mine eyes leave once to shut up their lids. But if any sleep entered my sorrowful breast, it did so faintly remain there that the least stir or noise was able enough to have broken it. And yet, although it was but weak, it did not tarry with me without representing many fierce battles in his kind of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

accustomary demonstrations to my affrighted mind. And this did not happen to me that night only, of which I spake of alone, but many times before, and I was almost continually molested after with the same accidents. Wherefore my soul, both waking and sleeping, hath and doth feel equal and like tempestuous storms. The complaints which I poured forth in the night time took not away their turn and place in the day, but, as excused now for sorrowing again by reason of those lies which I told my Husband, from that night forward I did many times lament, and did begin to be extremely sad and sorrowful in open and public company. But the day being come on, my trusty Nurse (from whom the least part of my griefs was not hid, because she was the first that knew the amorous signs in my face, and had also imagined divers future accidents in the same) coming to visit me, when it was told her *Oh, how many times simple husbands are deceived* that Panphilus had chosen another Woman, and doubting of me, and most careful for my neglected weal, my Husband no sooner went out of the Chamber, but she immediately entered in. And seeing me (through the great anguish and grief of the last night) to lie as one half-dead, with divers comfortable words she went about to assuage my furious evils, and fervent passions, and taking me in her arms, with trembling hands she wiped my face all blubbered with tears, with speaking these words :

THE FIFTH BOOK

“ Young Lady, and my dearest Mistress, thy sorrows make me beyond all measure sorrowful, and would afflict me more, had not I warned thee of them before. But thou (more wilful than wise), forsaking my willing counsels and precepts, hast headlong followed thy flattering conceits and pleasures, wherefore with sorrowful cheer I see thee unhappily overcome with these griefs, which must needs be due chastisements for thy rash and unreasonable follies. But because everyone may always as long as life doth last (so that he have a willing mind to perform it) decline from his wicked ways, and turn again into the right, I shall think it the dearest thing to me that may happen, if from henceforth thou wouldest shake off the dark cloud from the eyes of thy understanding, obscured by this wicked tyrant, and restore to them again the clear light of truth. What he is, the momentary delights and the prolonged griefs which thou hast passed and dost endure for him, may make thee apparently know. Thou hast, like a young *Youth followeth will more than reason* and simple Woman, following more thy unbridled will than reined reason, fondly loved, and in loving, to that end which is not only expected, but commonly also desired in such passions, hast attained, and yet (as it is said) hast known it to be but a more short than sweet delight. And what thing else can there be desired or looked for hereafter, than that which thou hast already had.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

“ And yet, if happily it might come to pass that Panphilus should return again into thine arms, thou shouldest feel no other pleasure than thou wert wont to do. Fervent and hot desires are wont to be in new things, in the which many times putting a certain kind of hope of a false imaginative pleasure, and thinking that, that good is hidden in them (which perhaps is not), with great grief do make appassionate Lovers endure their force and heat. Whereas those things which are already known are wont to be more temperately and but meanly liked of, and not half so much in request. But overruled too much with the greediness of thy disordinate appetite, and disposing of thyself altogether to new and fanatical opinions, thou dost perform the contrary. Wise and discreet folks, perceiving themselves to be in troublesome places, and full of doubtful dangers, are wont to retire back again, rather content and willing to leese their labour and travail, which they have endured until that place, to the which they have arrived, and deeming it better to return safely again, than going on forward, to endanger themselves, and to get no other end of their rash attempt than sudden death. Follow thou therefore the like example, while thou mayest, and place now, with more modesty, advised reason before lawless will, and wisely hale and help thyself again out of thy pit of peril and sorrow, into the which thou hast suffered thyself foolishly to fall. Fortune,

THE FIFTH BOOK

perhaps yet favourable unto thee (if with advice thou wilt take heed), hath not forestalled thy passage in returning back again, nor hath so covered and choked up the same, but that (discerning thy footsteps well) thou mayest by the selfsame come back again, from whence thou didst first move thy headlong feet, and be once again that Fiammetta which whilom thou wert wont to be.

“Thy good name, thine honour, and thy known virtues are yet unstained and whole, and whatsoever thou hast yet done is not in the minds of many secret, nor in the knowledge of any public person commaculated, which being once corrupted, hath been heretofore the only means, and yet is (as we daily see) an occasion, to make one fall into the uttermost and deepest place of all mischief. Proceed therefore no further, lest thou contemn and waste that which Fortune hath reserved for thee. Comfort thyself with this imagination, that thou didst never see Panphilus, or else that thy husband was the same man. Thy indifferent fantasy is apt to any conceit, and imaginations are easily suffered to be wrought like Ware. By this way only thou mayest make thyself merry again, which thing thou oughtest specially to desire, if anguish and sorrow afflict thee so much, as thy words do promise, and thy countenance doth protest.”

These words and such like, not once, but many

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

times, with a sorrowful mind did I hear, without making any answers to them again. And though I was beyond all measure troubled in mind—notwithstanding I knew them to be most true, but yet the matter very ill-disposed—did receive them without any profit at all. But turning me now on one side, and now on another, sometimes it happened that, moved with raving anger, and not respecting the presence of my austere Nurse, with a voice enraged with womanly grief, and with a sorrowful kind of complaint, and greater than any of the rest, I said thus :

“ O Megera, O Tesiphon, O Alecto, tormentors of wicked and woeful souls, let your horrible and ugly hair stand up, and incense the cruel and fierce Hydras with venomous anger, and kindle them to new kinds of quaking fears, and with flinging your crawling Snakes in her face, enter speedily into the wicked chamber of that damned adulteress. Inflamm your miserable brands for her vile conjunctions that she enjoyeth now with her robbed lover, and beset their delicate bed about with them in sign of a dire presage to wicked lovers. O any else people of the black habitations of infernal Dis, O ye Gods of the immortal kingdoms of Styx, be present there, and with your luckless lamentations smite fear and horror into these faithless friends. O miserable Scritch Owl, sit and sing over their hapless house.

“ And O you ominous Harpies, give them some

THE FIFTH BOOK

terrible sign of future woes. O eternal Chaos and darkness, enemy to all light, possess the adulterers' houses so, that their wicked eyes may not behold nor enjoy any comfortable light at all. And let your malice (O ye revengers of wicked things) enter into those minds which are so ready to change, and raise up cruel contention and tragical murders between them." After this, casting out a hot burning sigh, I added these words following: "O most wicked woman, whosoever thou art (unknown to me) thou dost now possess my lover, so long, and so often, wished for of me, and I (miserable woman) being far from him, do in the meantime languish in continual pain. Thou dost enjoy the guerdon of my travails and deserts, and I (deceived of the fruit) do remain still in sowing and pouring forth prayers, and consume myself in watering them with continual drops of tears.

"I have offered orisons and incense to the Gods for his prosperity (whom thou hast secretly embezzled from me) and they were heard only for thy profit. And now, behold with what art (I know not) nor how thou hast rooted him out of my loving heart, and engrafted him (false woman) in thine. And yet I know that it is so. But with such content, and so mayest thou love, and live (I wish) as thou hast made me to do. And if (perhaps) it be too hard for him to fall in love the third time, then let the Gods divide your loves, no otherwise than they did dissolve the Grecian Lady's and the Judge's of Ida,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

or as they did dissever that of the young man of Abydos and of his vigilant and sorrowful Hero, or as they did break off those of the miserable Sons of Eolus—bending their sharp judgment only against thee, he himself remaining safe. O naughty woman, thou must needs have thought (viewing well his comely face) that he was not without some Lady, and loving Mistress.

“If thou didst therefore suppose this (which I know thou didst imagine), with what mind didst thou practise to take that away which appertained to another? With an envious and fraudulent mind I am sure. Wherefore I will, as my mortal enemy and wrongful occupier of my goods, pursue thee evermore, and as long as I live will nourish and preserve my life with hope of thy shameful and cruel death. The which I wish may not be so common and natural as to others it is, but that turned into a lump of massy lead, or Ixion’s heavy stone tied about thy neck, thou mayest be cast into some deep and dark cave, amongst the midst of thy enemies’ murdering hands, and that neither fire nor funeral be granted to burn and bury thy torn and massacred members, but being pulled in pieces, and scattered abroad, they may serve to glut the hungry maws of howling dogs and ravenous wolves. Which I pray (after they have devoured thy soft and tender flesh) may for thy naked bones fiercely jar and cruelly fight one with

THE FIFTH BOOK

another, so that gradually gnawing, and breaking them in pieces with their whetted teeth, they may lively represent thy wicked prey and thee, delighted with thy gluttonous rapine, which in thy detested lifetime thou didst foully commit.

“There shall not escape one day, not one night, no, not one hour, but my ready mouth shall be full of endless curses. Sooner shall the Celestial Bear plump down into the ocean, and the raging waves of Sicilian Carybdis shall be quiet, and the barking Dogs of Scylla shall hold their peace, and ripe Corn shall grow in the waves of the Ionian sea, and the darkest night in her chiefest obscurity shall shine like Titan his beams, and water with fire, death with life, and the Sea with winds shall sooner with breachless faith be at truce and make concord together, before I will reconcile and establish a peace with thee (vile monster of womankind). But rather whilst golden Ganges shall be hot and Istrus cold, and while high hills shall bear sturdy Oaks, and the soft and watered meadows green grass, so long (foul brothel) will I be at continual war and defiance with thee, which neither mortal hatred nor death shall determine, but pursuing thee amongst the dead ghosts and fiends of Hell, with all those torments that are used there, I will continually plague, and eternally punish thy damned soul for thy condemned and hateful deed.

“But if perchance thou dost survive me, what-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

soever the manner of my death shall be, and wheresoever my miserable Ghost shall wander, from thence, perforce, I will labour to take it, and, entering into thy loathsome body, will make thee as mad as the Virgins after they had received Apollo. Or else, coming in thy sight broad waking, thou shalt see me in a most horrible shape, and in thy fearful sleep oftentimes will I awake and affright thee in the uncomfortable silence of the dark night.

*The virgins
—that is,
the diviners*

“ And, briefly, in whatsoever thou goest about, or doest, I will continually be a horrible object to thy wicked eyes, and a griping corsive to thy hellish heart : and then (remembering this cruel injury) I will not suffer thee to be quiet in any place. And so long as thou livest, with such a hideous fury (myself the only worker of it) thou shalt be continually haunted.

“ And when thou art dead I will minister occasions of more dire stratagems unto thy miserable ghost. Alas, poor wretched that I am, to what end are my bootless words prolonged ? I bark and threaten, and thou dost bite and hurt me, and, unfolding my beloved Panphilus between thy unworthy arms, dost care as much for my menacing and offensive words as high and mighty kings for their inferior and impotent vassals : and no more than conquering Captains for their confounded captives. Alas, would I had now Dedalus his art, or Medea’s Coach, because making wings by the one for my

THE FIFTH BOOK

shoulders, and being carried in the air by the other, I might suddenly alight there, where thou dost basely hide and nestle thyself with thy stolen love. Oh, how many thundering words, and what threatening invectives, with bended brows would I cast out against that false youth, and against thee, unjust robber of another's felicity ! Oh, with what villainous terms would I reprehend your detestable follies !

“And after that I had amazed, appalled and attainted your wicked faces with a shameful blush, with recital of these unshameful faults, I would then without delay proceed to sharp revenge, and taking thy hair (false enchantress) in my hands, with pulling and renting them, and drawing thee here and there by thy tresses before thy perfidious lover, I would glut my swelling anger, and tearing thy garments from thy disgraced body, with reproachful taunts I would triumph over thee, malapert and wicked traitoress. Nor this should not suffice me to fulfil my due anger, nor be half enough for thee to expiate thy odious crime, but with sharp nails I would disfigure that painted visard, which so much pleased his false eyes, leaving an eternal memorial of their characters and revenge in it. And thy miserable body with my greedy teeth piecemeal I should shiver, leaving the which afterwards unto him (that doth now flatter thee) to heal again, myself (joyful for part of so small vengeance) would hie me home again to my sorrowful habitacles.”

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Whilst I spake these words with fiery sparkling eyes, with closed teeth, and with bended fist, as though I had been at the very action itself, I remained a pretty while silent : and methought I had indeed played one Pageant of my greedy revenge. But the old Nurse, with mournful voice, lamenting, said thus unto me :

“ O daughter, since thou dost not know the furious tyranny of this passion—which thou callest thy God—who doth thus molest thee, temperate thyself, and bridle thy piteous complaints.

“ And if the due pity which thou shouldest take of thy own self doth not move thee hereunto, let
The care of her honour must warn every wise woman from vain thoughts and deeds the regard of thy honour persuade thee to it, which for an old error passed, may lightly be stained with a new shame : or at least withhold these complaints and outcries, lest that thy loving husband perceive not the indirect causes of thy doleful complaints. And so for two causes he might worthily be sorry and aggrieved at thy senseless folly.”

Then being put in mind of my husband, and thinking of the wrong and shame I had done him, moved with new pity, I lamented more sensibly than I did before, and discussing in my mind my corrupted faith, and the holy laws of wedlock violated, I said :

“ O most faithful companion in my troubles, my husband may be sorry for little or nothing. For he, which was the occasion of my offence, hath been a

THE FIFTH BOOK

severe purger of the same. I have long since received a guerdon, and am yet paid with so severe a reward for my demerits. My husband could not imagine to give me any greater punishment than that which my late lover hath afflicted me withal. Only death (if death be painful, as it is commonly said) my husband may annex to my other torments. Let him then therefore come and give it me quickly. It shall be no pain for me to die, but a wished pleasure, because I greatly desire the same.

“And it shall be more acceptable and welcome to me, performed by his own hands, whom so greatly I have offended, than perpetrated by any others, or by my own. If he do not give me it, or if it doth not voluntarily come unto me, my troubled wits shall find out some speedy passage to it, because by means of that I hope to conclude all my sorrow at once.

“Huge hell, the last and extremest punishment of damned miserable souls, in the most tormenting place of all, hath not any torture so forcible or equal with mine. Ancient authors allege and bring in Titius for an example of great punishment, saying that his increasing liver is continually beaked and devoured of a greedy vulture. And certes, though I account his pain not little, yet it is not like to mine. For if the hungry Vulture feed upon his liver, a hundred thousand thousand griping and stinging

*Divers
punish-
ments of
damned
souls com-
pared to
the pains
of a lover*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

griefs continually gnaw my heart more than sharp bills of any preying Birds. They likewise affirm that Tantalus, placed between clear water and goodly fruit, doth evermore die for hunger and thirst.

“Myself (alas) put in the midst, and swimming in all mundane delights, with affectionate desire wishing my lover and not enjoying him, do sustain as much, nay, rather greater pain than he. Because, with never-ceasing hope, he thinks sometimes to taste of these fresh waters, and ruddy Apples, that hang on every side about him. But I (despairing now altogether of that which I once hoped would have been my comfort) do neither see nor can excogitate any ease for my grief; and loving him more than ever I did, by the alluring forces of another woman, and of his proper accord also, is so kept back that he hath not only cast me quite out of his remembrance, but that by means thereof I am debarred to entertain the smallest hope that may be of my welfare for ever after. And miserable Ixion also, turmoiling eternally at his unruly wheel, doth not feel such cruel pain, that it may be likened to mine. Because, myself shaken with continual motions of furious madness, by my adverse fates do suffer much more grief than ever he can do. And if the daughters of Danaus with lost labour do continually pour water into tubs full of holes, thinking to fill them, I strain forth greater plenty of tears

THE FIFTH BOOK

by the overflowing conduits of my eyes, drawn from the hollow cave and centre of my heart. Wherefore do I trouble myself to recite these infernal tortures by one and one since that there is heaped in me a greater Chaos of miseries than any there divided, or conjoined. And if I had no other kind of anguish to cruciate my miserable soul, that I must of necessity keep my dolours secret, or at the least conceal and hide their offspring, whereas they, with loud voices, careless speeches, public actions (conformable to their sorrows), might discover and manifest theirs, by so much the more should my pains be adjudged greater and more grievous than theirs. For (alas) how strong the restrained fire and how more violently doth it burn than that which hath full scope and no obstacle to exhalate and throw his flames abroad. And how grievous a thing it is not to be permitted to speak one word of extreme sorrow that doth sensibly torment one, and that it is not lawful to tell the annoyous occasion of it, but under the show of a merry countenance it is convenient to hide it in the secret closet of an impatient and painful heart. Wherefore, not extreme sorrow only,

*Death a
lightening
of sorrow*

but external death, shall be a lightening of my grief. Let, therefore, my dear husband come, and in one hour let him revenge himself, and rid me out of these pains. Let his unsheathed sword open my miserable and naked breast, and let him in one instant with plenty of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

my blood pull forth my sorrowing soul, and dissolve my infinite and heaped woes, and (as my vile wickedness doth deserve) let him tear this heart, the retainer of these vile injuries, the principal deceiver of his true affections, and the chiefest receiver of his feigned friend and secret enemy.”

After that the Nurse did see me hold my peace, and begin to weep bitterly, with a mild and low voice she began to reply : “ O dear daughter, what meaneth this, which so frantically thou speakest ? Thy words are as vain as thy conceits more foolish. I have seen (being now an old woman) many things which have passed in this world and have daily known the order and course of many ladies’ and gentlewomen’s loves. And (although I am not to be accounted myself amongst them) yet, nevertheless, have I once felt the secret poison of these amorous darts which are more grievous sometimes and much more troublesome to those of lower degree and of poor condition than to the nobler and higher personages, whenas all the means and passages to the attaining of their desires and pleasures are stopped and cut off from them that are needy and poor ; whereas they at their will, and with their wealth, may break an open way to heaven. And that, which thou sayest to be almost impossible, and so grievous unto thee, I never conceived, nor felt to be half so painful, and nothing so hard as thou dost make it. Which grief, although it be indeed very

THE FIFTH BOOK

great, ought not, for all that, to work such effects in thee as to consume and waste thyself in such woes, and thereby to seek thy own death, which more rashly and furiously than by any good motion of wisdom or argument of reason thou dost wish for. I know well, that burning anger procured by fury is blinded, and careth not to cover itself, nor doth brook any bridle, and doth admit no reason, and is not afraid of death, but rather driven on headlong and urged of itself, it resisteth the mortal pricks of sharp swords. But if thou wouldest let this anger of itself wax somewhat colder, I doubt not but thy kindled folly should be made more manifest to that temperate and cooled part. And therefore, good daughter, with patience sustain his great force, and give place to his fury.

“Wherefore note my words a little, and settle thy mind upon the examples which I will propound unto thee. Thou art with incessant anguish of mind most sorrowful (if I have well perceived thy speeches) for the long absence of thy beloved youth gone from thee, and for his faithless fidelity, and for the second love of his new choice. And being aggrieved at these (perhaps) uncertain and unjust injuries reckonest no pain like unto thine. But (certes) if thou wouldest be so wise as I do wish thee, thou shalt for ease of all these painful accidents (pondering well my words) receive an easy and an effectual remedy. The young man whom thou lovest

*Weak
comforts*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

ought without all doubt (according to the laws and ordinances of love) to love thee again, as thou dost him, and if he doth not, he doth very ill—and yet there is no force to compel him thereunto, since everyone may use the benefit of his own liberty as it pleaseth him best. If thou dost love him greatly, and so much that thereby thou dost endure great pain, he is not therefore to be blamed; nor thou canst not justly be aggrieved with him therefore, considering that thou thyself art the chiefest cause of this. For mighty Love (although he be a great Lord, and his forces are inevitable) could not, for all that, against thy will place thy Lover in thy heart.

“Thy vagrant wit and idle thoughts were the first originals of thy love, which, if thou hadst effectually opposed with thy might, these sorrowful events had not happened unto thee, as now they have done, but, as one free from such uncouth passions, thou mightest have mocked him, and all others, as he, disporting himself with his new love (as thou sayest), doth now make but a jest of thee. It is therefore necessary, since that thou hast submitted thy liberty to his Law, to govern thy passions according to his pleasures, and since he thinks it best to be far from thee, that thou content thyself, and not repine thereat. If with tears he did vow entire faith unto thee, and promised thee to return, he did not use any new thing herein, but an old and common trick, practised out of memory, and

THE FIFTH BOOK

performed every day of most Lovers. And these are the pranks, and many more such fashions of like consequence, which are daily taught and learned in thy God his Court. But if he hath not kept with thee that faith and promise, there was never any Judge that, in deciding of this matter, could say any more of it but that he did not well, and would so acquit him, thinking also with thyself that he should do the like (if any other strange love, or fortune, had given thee over to such a breach of former faith) as now thou shouldest, and I do wish thee to do. He is not also the first that hath done so, nor thou the first to whom like accidents have befallen. Jason

*Divers
examples of
those that
forsook their
lovers* departed from Lemnos from Hipsiphile, and returned into Thessaly to Medea, and from her afterwards to Creusa. Amorous Paris went from the woods of Ida from

Ænone, and returned to Troy with fair Helen. Theseus went from Crete from Ariadne, and came to Athens to Phedra. And yet for all this neither Hipsiphile, Ænone nor Ariadne killed themselves, but, rejecting all vain thoughts, buried their false Lovers in dark oblivion. Love (as I said above) doth thee no wrong at all, or hath done thee any more than thou thyself wouldest take. He useth his bow and arrows without any respect of persons, as we may daily see by proof. And there are so many and manifest examples, making so clear on his side, and for his manner of inordinate dealings, that none

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

can worthily be aggrieved at any bad success which he giveth, and that can with reason (almost) bewail the ordinary grief, pains and care which by his means and molestations his followers have, but rather complain and lament their voluntary submission, and be sorrowful for their frank consent with which they yielded to him. For he, being but a wanton, naked and blind boy, doth fly and alight he knoweth not where himself. Wherefore, to be sorrowful for his accustomed and indirect usages, to bewail his unkind and froward abuses, to receive no comfort by him, or by no means to think to remove him, is rather a loss of words and wind.

“The new Woman, who hath taken thy beloved in her nets, or else whom he hath with his cunning guiles overcome, and whom with so many revenging words thou dost menace, with her own fault (perhaps) hath not made him hers, but he, with his important suits (it may be), and with his flattering and pitiful words, great gifts, and serviceable deeds, hath won her to be his. And as thou wert wont (not able to resist his enchanting prayers, and to behold his woeful tears), so she, perhaps, as flexible by prayers, promises and protestations as thyself, could not endure them without some great pity of his distressed and sorrowful cause. If he could so well, by amorous complaints, express his hot desires, and could so cunningly (as thou hast told), like a Crocodile, whensoever it pleased him, bewail and lament,

THE FIFTH BOOK

then must thou clearly know that tears, joined with beauty, are of great force to obtain their request. And besides this. Say that the Gentlewoman, with her sugared speeches and gracious behaviour, hath overcome him; why, is it not a thing commonly used nowadays in the world, that everyone doth seek his own advantage, not having any regard or *Everyone* care to another his prejudice, but where and *seeketh* when he findeth, even there and then he *his own* taketh as he best may. The good Woman, as expert as thyself in these affairs, knowing (perhaps) him to be a cunning Knight in Venus' Courtly battles, allured him therefore the more unto her. And who withholdeth thee, or what impediment hast thou to hinder thee, that thou mayest not do the like to some other? Which thing, albeit, I neither counsel nor command. But if there can be no more done than may be, and that of necessity thou art constrained to follow Love, whensoever thou wilt pull thy neck out of his servile yoke thou mayest quickly find a great number of young and lusty Gentlemen in this City, more valiant, noble, proper, more worthy and more loving, and a great deal more constant than he is. Who (as I certainly believe), to obtain but the smallest favour at thy hands that he hath had, would gladly kiss the very ground that thou treadest on. Whose sundry kinds of delightful services, and sweet pleasures, shall so by little and little drive him out of thy

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

remembrance, as he hath for love of his new Gentlewoman banished thee (perhaps) out of his memory.

“Jupiter laugheth at these promised faiths and solemn oaths when they are broken. And whosoever doth use one but according as he is used himself, what can the world speak or think of any more than the deserts of such an one did require? To keep faith with one that hath broken his is reputed nowadays but mere mockery, and to requite deceits with deceits is esteemed no small point of wisdom.

“Medea, forsaken of Jason, entertained Egeus. And Ariadne, forsaken of Theseus, got Bacchus for her Husband, and so were their mournings turned into mirth. Temperate therefore thy griefs, and suffer thy pains patiently, because thou hast not any occasion to be sorrowful more for another than to be pitiful towards thyself. And whensoever thou wilt thou shalt find opportunity enough to make them cease, considering that the same and greater griefs than thine were sometimes sustained and passed away by others, greater and more noble personages than thyself. For Deianira was forgot of Hercules for Iole, and Phillis of Demophoon, and Penelope of Ulysses for Circe. And all their torments and passions were greater than thine, by how much the heat of their love was greater and more fervent than thine. And so much the more if their divine essence, immortal powers, and the haughty condition of those notable men and Women are

THE FIFTH BOOK

well considered, and yet they suffered them. In these disgraces, therefore, thou art not alone, nor the first. And those adversities in the which patients have company are not so grievous and painful to them, as thou thyself dost say. Wherefore be merry again, and expel these vain cares, admonishing thee to have before thine eyes a continual doubt and fear of thy dear Husband, and of his just anger, and yet unconceived jealousy, to whose ears, if perhaps these follies (as needs they must at last) should come, admit (as thou sayest), that he could give thee no other, nor no less punishment than death, the very same (forasmuch as one can die but once) ought everyone (when his hour is come, and when he can) to take it in the best sort and order he may. And think, that if that kind of death, which in thy rage and angry mood thou dost so quickly and so wickedly desire, should follow and happen unto thee, with what great infamy and everlasting shame should thy living memory, thy dear honour, thy good name, and thine honesty, survive and remain for ever after blotted and ignominiously obscured.

“Worldly things should be used, not as troublesome substances, but as transitory shadows. Wherefore, from henceforth, let neither thyself, nor any other, put any affiance in them, whether they have a prosperous or preposterous issue, nor yet, thrown down in adversity, let not any of the other side

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

despair of the best. Clotho mingleth these and those things together, and forbiddeth that Fortune be stable and constant, and changeth every fate. None had ever the Gods so favourable to their wills that they might presently bind them unto them, or could at any time have them tied to their affections. For they, provoked by the guilt of our sins, turn our affairs topsy-turvy, and Fortune again helpeth those that be valiant, courageous and stout-minded, rejecting those that are pusillanimous, fearful and doubtful in their enterprises. And now it is time to prove if virtue have any place in thee. Admitted that at all times it may never be removed, though oppressed with dark clouds of adversities and darkened with black tempests of misfortune it is oftentimes choked and lieth secret and hidden. Hope also hath this property annexed to it, that it is not a guide to afflictions, nor showeth any way to grief or sorrow. Wherefore, he that may hope in anything, let him despair of nothing. We are tossed with the fluctuant waves of our destinies, and those things (believe me) that they prepare for us cannot with so light care, with so small regard, or with so soon labour be changed. The greater part almost of that which we (mortal generation) either do, or suffer, cometh from the heavens above.

“Lachesis doth keep a decreed Law to her Distaff, and doth draw forth everything by a limited way. The first day she giveth thee is the last : neither is it lawful to wrest determined things, and wrought

THE FIFTH BOOK

above with the influences of the Planets, to another course. It hath hurt many to be afraid of an immovable order, and many also in not fearing the same. Because while these are afearing their own destinies, the very same are already befallen to them unawares. Leave therefore thy griefs and sorrows, which voluntarily thou hast procured, and live joyfully, putting thy hope in the Gods, and endeavour to do well: because it hath oftentimes come to pass that when one doth think himself furthest from felicity, then with an inopinate step he is suddenly entered into it. Many Ships, securely sailing through the deep and wide Seas, have been oftentimes cast away in the mouth of the wished Haven. And some again, despairing altogether of succour, have in the selfsame day, and danger, yea suddenly, arrived to the desired end of their long voyage. And I have seen many trees smit with Jupiter's scorching lightnings, and in few days after again covered over with green leaves, and loaden with goodly fruit. And some, again, cherished with great care, by some secret and sudden accident withered quite away. Fickle Fortune doth yield sundry effects: for as she hath been the instrument of thy long grief, so (if by hope thou dost nourish thy life) she will likewise minister to thee many occasions and wholesome means of double joy again."

And now she held her peace.

But as many times as she perceived me distracted into these unwonted and extremest passions, so did

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

the sage Nurse use these speeches towards me, thinking with herself to drive these irremovable griefs and obstinate anguish out of my mind, reserved only for the full consummation of my death. But none, or few, of her grave counsels did touch my troubled mind with effect, and the greatest part of them, spent in vain, vanished away in the air. And my sorrowful soul did every day more sensibly feel more green and grievous wounds. Wherefore, lying many times upright upon my rich bed, with my face covered between mine arms, I imagined divers great matters and strange things in my troubled mind. And now I will begin (pitiful Ladies) to tell of most

<i>They that love unfor- tunately do often- times think to kill themselves</i>	cruel things, and not credible almost to be hatched in the breast of a simple Woman, if the sequel of these, or greater than these, were not seen afterwards to come to pass. My heart being therefore cleaved almost
--	---

asunder with unspeakable grief, and perceiving my Lover to be far from me, like a desperate and frantic Woman I began thus to say to myself :

“ Behold the very self and same occasion which Sidonian Eliza had to abandon this hateful world cruel Panphilus hath given me. And (alas) a great deal worse. It pleaseth him that, forsaking these, I seek out other regions. And since I am become his subject I will fulfil his hard behest and pitiless pleasure : and in one hour I will requite my hapless love, my committed wickedness, and my injured

THE FIFTH BOOK

and dear husband with a tragical and unnatural death. And if oppressed souls, delivered out of this corporal prison, have any liberty in the new world, I will without delay conjoin mine with his. And where my body cannot be, my soul shall supply the place of it. Behold, therefore, I will die, and so rid me of all these pains. I think it most convenient, that with these hands I execute this last stratagem upon myself. Because there can be no other hand so cruel that can perfectly perform that which justly I have deserved. I will, therefore, without delay willingly take my death, the remembrance of which, although it be terrible to my weak fear, and to my womanly thoughts, yet shall it be as welcome unto me as this painful life is irksome unto my soul."

And after that I had resolved upon this last pretence, I began to devise with myself which was, of a thousand ways, the best to take my life from me. And first of all, cold and sharp irons came to my mind, the mortal means of many one his untimely death, considering that the said Eliza by their cruelty did forsake this common air: and then, after these, the deaths of Biblis and Amata were presented before mine eyes, the manner of which was offered to me to end my weary life. But more careful of my honour and good name than chary of myself, and fearing more the manner of dying than death itself—the one seeming unto me very infamous, and the other too extreme cruel in the mouths and minds of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

everyone—were occasions to make me refuse the one, and not to like of the other. Afterwards I imagined to do as the Sagontines, and as those of Abydos did, the first fearing Hannibal, of Carthage, and the other Philip of Macedon, committing themselves and all their goods to the fury of consuming flames. But knowing that this could be no small detriment to my dear Husband, unculpable and guiltless of my evils, I refused also this kind of death, as I did the rest before. After these I called to mind the venomous juices—which heretofore assigned to Socrates, to Sophonisba, to Hannibal, and to many other Princes more, their last days. And many of these, indeed, as they pleased my changeable fancy, so did I think them fit for the purpose. But, perceiving that in going about to seek them no little time was requisite, and doubting lest by inquiry of them my drifts should be called in question, and sifted out, and that my determined purpose also, in the meanwhile, might perhaps have been altered, I imagined to seek out some other kinds of death. Wherefore I bethought me (as many times I had done before) to yield up my feeble spirits between my knees, but doubting lest it should be known, and suspecting some other impediment incident to it, I passed to other headlong thoughts. And the very same occasion (and lest I should be also seen) made me forsake the burning, and swallowed coals of Portia. But the death of Ino and of Melicerta, and

THE FIFTH BOOK

likewise the hunger-starved end of Erisichthone, occurring to my memory, the long time that I should have in executing the one and in staying for the other made me also to reject them, thinking that the pain of the last did a great while nourish the languishing body. But, besides all these ways, the precipitate death of Perdix, falling from the highest Tower of Crete, came also to my mind, which speedy kind of death only pleased me infallibly to follow, as one devoid of all ensuing infamy, saying to myself: "Casting myself down from the highest Turrets of my Palace, I shall crush my bones in a hundred pieces, and dash out my brains, and by all those several pieces will yield up my hapless soul, contaminated with prepared gore, and ready broken up to be offered up as a Sacrifice to the Gods. And few, or none, there are that will imagine and say that by mine own cruelty, fury or proper will this death befell unto me, but imputing it rather to some unlucky chance, with pouring out pitiful tears for me, will bewail my untimely death, and curse my froward Fortune."

This deliberation, therefore, took place in my mind, and it liked me especially to put the same in
Wicked thoughts ever war with good practice, thinking to have used great pity towards me, if I had perhaps become pitiless and cruel against mine own self. This determination, therefore, had now taken sure root in my heart, and I did not attend for anything else

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

but fit time, when a chilly cold, suddenly entering into all my bones, made me tremble for very fear, which brought these words with it, saying: "O miserable Woman, what dost thou intend to do? Wilt thou (overcome with mad anger) in a senseless rage and fury cast thyself away? If thou wert now constrained to die of some grievous infirmity wouldest not thou (alas) endeavour and seek to live, because at the length thou mightest see thy Panphilus once more before thy death? Dost not thou think that when thou art dead thou shall never see him again, and that no kind of pity that he may use in thy behalf may help thee anything at all? For what did the slack return of Demophoon profit unpatient and strangled Phillis? She, flourishing, without any delight felt his coming, which if she could have stayed for he might have found her still a Woman as he left her, and not a Tree. Live, therefore, Fiammetta, for he will yet for all this (returning as a friend or as an enemy at length) come to thee again. And with what disposed mind soever he return, thou canst not choose but love him still. And perhaps thou shalt see him, talk with him, and move his unconstant and hard heart to compassion of thy woeful plights. He is not made of sturdy Oak, nor of Flinty stone, nor born, bred, nor nourished in a hollow Cave amongst wild Beasts, and did never suck the milk of Tigers, nor drink any other savage and cruel beast's blood, neither is his heart made of Diamond,

THE FIFTH BOOK

or of steel, and is not of so brutish and rustical inclination but that he will lend his ears and bend his heart to my pitiful complaints, passions and persuasions, and take some remorse of co-equal commiseration of my sustained sorrows. But if he will not be overcome with pity, then, wearied of thy loathsome life, it shall be more lawful for thee (driven on by manifest despair) to kill thyself. Thou hast passed away more than one whole year (without him) a pensive and painful life, and well mayest thou yet (though with redoubted grief) rub out another.

Any may have death whensoever they will Death doth not fail at any time, whensoever one doth either desire or procure it, which will be then as prest, and more ready to come, than now he is. And thou mayest then depart with hope, be he never so malicious and cruel, that being at thy present and hapless death he will shed some tears. Recall therefore again thy overrash and cruel advice. Because whosoever hasteneth too much to wicked counsel studieth afterwards to repent himself by leisure. And this

Who hasteneth to wicked counsel studieth to repent at leisure last part of thy tragical life, which thou dost mean to play, is not a thing that may afterwards be amended with vain repentance: which if it did follow could not, with all the force it had, recall it back again."

My mind being thus mollified with these arguments, with a sudden altered purpose, and inopinate advice, I kept a long time in an equal poise

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

of moderate reason. But, dreadful Megera, lancing it with sharp and mortal wounds of grief, disturbed my settled senses, and disturbed my willing mind from following this good motion, and egged me on to prosecute and to practise my first unnatural and cruel resolution, which now I thought privily and earnestly to bring to effect. Wherefore (to cloak it) I always showed mine old Nurse a merry countenance, and did finely counterfeit my sad cheer with some pleasant kind of comfortable speeches, to whom, because I would have had her gone out of the Chamber, I said: "Behold (good Mother) how I have planted thy most true reasons and grave counsels with great profit in my breast, but, because this blind fury may depart out of my foolish mind, withdraw thyself from hence awhile, and leave me to my rest, that am now very desirous to sleep." But she, being as full of subtlety as myself, and as one that did divine of my secret intent, commended much the mind I had to sleep, and, as she was commanded, went a little way from me, into a dark corner hard by, but would by no means go out of the Chamber.

But, because I would not give her any occasion to suspect that which I went about, clean contrary to my mind and desire I seemed to like well of her staying still, thinking that after she had seen me sleep she would have gone away. With quiet rest, therefore, I feigned this imagined deceit, in the which,

THE FIFTH BOOK

although nothing appeared outwardly, yet thinking of that hour which should have been my last in this pleasing world, full of bitter anguish, and environed round about with legions of stinging griefs, I muttered forth these words to myself, saying :

“ O miserable Fiammetta, and of all Women that live in this world the most miserable, behold thy Glass is now run, thy latest day, hour and last period is come. And after that from the highest place of thy Palace thou shalt have thrown thyself headlong down, and that thy soul shall have forsaken thy bruised body, then let thy tears be dried up, let thy sighs then surcease, and thy sorrows and desires be determined, and then in one hour, with the dear price of thy spilled blood, and with the ransom of thy pale death, thou shalt redeem thyself from the bonds and captivity of love. And then shalt thou cancel the verbal Obligation of Panphilus his promised and unperformed faith. This day thou shalt have the deserved embracings of him. This day the Military Ensigns of love shall cover thy body with a dishonest and unseemly torture. This day thy wearied spirits shall see him. This day thou shalt know for whom thou hast forsaken thyself. This day of force thou shalt make him pitiful. This day thou shalt begin the vengeance of the young and wicked Sorceress, and thy malicious co-partner.

“ But, O ye Gods, if any pity doth harbour in your divine breasts, be favourable to me in these my

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

last prayers. Suffer not my death and the memory of my life to pass amongst the rude populace with blot of dishonour and stain of infamy. And if, in taking the same, there be any fault committed, behold there is a present satisfaction, since that I die with fear to publish the occasion thereof: the revealing of which should be, certes, no small comfort unto me, if I believed that in talking of it it might escape without ignominious blame. Make my dear Husband also (ye sacred Gods) suffer it with patience, whose true love, if I had duly observed and had rightly performed Juno's holy laws, I might have yet lived a happy and merry Woman, without troubling your divine Godheads with these earnest prayers. But, like an ignorant Woman of my thrice happy estate, and (as others of my condition are wont to do) following ever the worst, and forsaking the best, am now worthily appointed with this unfortunate and due recompense. O fatal Atropos, by thy infallible blow to all the world, I humbly pray thee, that thou wouldest with thy power guide my falling body, and dissolve my soul not with too great pain from the thread of thy Sister Lachesis. And thee, O Minos, receiver of it, by that love that sometimes burned thee, and by this blood which now I offer unto thee, even by the same, and by what else may move thee (infernal Judge), I obtest thee favourably to conduct it to the places appointed by thy just judgment

THE FIFTH BOOK

for it, and that so cruel and sharp torments be not prepared for it as to deem and repute the infinite pains that it hath already passed but light in respect of them to come."

After I had spoken these words to myself, incensed Tesiphon appeared before mine eyes, and with a senseless murmur, and contracted and menacing forehead, made me afraid of a worser life to ensue than that which was already past, but afterwards, with a kind of confused speech, saying that nothing which was never tried could be hurtful, inflamed my troubled mind with a more eager desire of my own ruin. Wherefore, perceiving that my old Nurse was not yet gone, and doubting lest her long tarrying might not mar my matters—being now resolved to die—or that some other accident might not take it quite away, with displayed arms upon my bed, and embracing it, I said: "O bed, farewell, praying the Gods that thou mayest be more fortunate and gracious to thy next Mistress whom thou shalt receive than thou hast been to me." After which words, my eyes rolling about the chamber, the which I never thought to have seen any more, surprised now with sudden grief, I was deprived of the light of the Heavens, and grovelling up and down, surseized (I know not) with what a shivering and trembling fear throughout all my body, I would have risen up, but every part of the same, overcome with quaking fear, did not suffer me, but

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

I fell suddenly down again, not once, but thrice, upon my face: in which occurrent I felt a fierce war between my angry soul and my timorous and vital spirits, which by main force did keep it still, that fain would have flown away. But my soul at last overcoming them, and driving away cold fear from me, suddenly kindled me with a hot and burning dolour, and so I recovered my wandered forces again. And, yet my face morphewed with the pale colour of death, I violently rose up, and as the sturdy Bull, having received some mortal prick, fiercely runneth up and down, beating and tormenting himself, even so, hellish Tesiphon, gadding madly up and down before mine eyes, made me (like a frantic and mad Woman, and not knowing mine own fancies) cast myself from the bed upon the ground, and led by this infernal fiend I did run towards the stairs that went up to the highest part of the house. And having in a trice leaped out of the Chamber, with most extreme lamentations and careless looks, viewing every part of the house, at last with a hollow and feeble voice I said: "O most unlucky lodging unto me, remain thou here for ever, and make my fall manifest to my Lover, if ever he return again. And thou, O dear Husband, comfort thyself, and from henceforward seek out a new wife, but a more wise, loving and more loyal mate than Fiammetta hath been unto thee. O my dear Sisters, Parents, and all the rest of my other companions

THE FIFTH BOOK

and friends (with all ye my faithful Servants), live ye here with all the favour that the Gods may afford you."

Thus like a mad Woman, with sorrowful words I did hasten to my wicked end. But the old Nurse,

The goodness of God oftentimes doth not suffer wicked determinations to come to effect as one by some sudden fear awaked out of a slumber, carelessly leaving off her work at the wheel, greatly amazed at the sight of this spectacle, lifted up her aged body, and, crying as loud as ever she could, made post haste to follow me, who with a hoarse voice, and scarcely understood of me,

said: "O daughter, whither dost thou run? What mad fury doth drive thee forward? Is this the fruit that my words (as thou saidst), by the received comfort of them, did put in thy breast? Whither goest thou? Tarry for me (alas)." Afterwards with a louder voice she yet exclaimed: "O ye young men, and servants of the house, come, come quickly, and take away this fond Woman, and keep her back from her furious actions and desperate intent!" Her vociferations were of no force, and their haste less speedy. And methought I had Mercury his wings fastened to my shoulders, and that swifter than Atalanta, nay, than any wind, I did fly to my violent death. But of unexpected chances (appending as well to good as to wicked purposes) one (alas) was an occasion to make me still enjoy this loathsome life: because my long garments, waving and blown

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

abroad with the force of my hasty flight, and friendly enemies to my furious pretence, myself also not able to restrain my course, were fastened (I know not how) to a shivered post by the wall as I was running, and interrupted my swift passage, which, for all the striving and pulling that I could do, did not suffer me to leave any piece of them behind me. Wherefore, whilst I was labouring to undo them, the sorrowful Nurse, breathless and panting, came upon me, to whom (I remember), with tainted cheeks, full of burning anger, and with outrageous outcries, I said: "O miserable old woman, pack from hence in an evil hour if thy life be dear unto thee. Thinking to help me thou dost hinder me, in not permitting me to execute this last and mortal duty, resolved thereunto, and spurred on

Who doth hinder one that is disposed to die, he himself doth kill him with an eager desire to cut in sunder the web of all my woes. Because whosoever doth let one from dying that is disposed, desirous and resolved to die, doth no less than kill him himself. Wherefore, thou art now become my homicide, thinking to deliver me from death, and (like the greatest enemy to my quiet rest) dost endeavour with thy thankless office to prolong my sorrows."

My tongue exclaimed, and my heart burned with ire, and yet, thinking to have loosed my garments in haste, I did entangle them more and more, which, as soon as I had found out the way to undo, I was

THE FIFTH BOOK

immediately held and stayed by the noise of the clamorous Nurse, so that, by her feeble forces and hanging upon me, I was greatly disturbed of my purpose. But, unwinding myself at last out of her hands, her strength had profited her nothing at all if the young Servants and Women at her continual exclamations had not come running from every part of the house and force, perforce, had not stayed me. Out of whose hands, with much struggling and divers frisks, and with greater forces also (the desire of death adding strength to my mighty will) I thought to have ungrappled myself, but breathless at the last, and overcome by them, I was carried back again to my Chamber, which once I thought never to have seen again. How many times (alas) with lamentable and bitter speeches did I chide them, saying :

“ O vile and base Servants, what boldness is this, that makes you so malapert, and what precipitate presumption is this that moves you so rudely and so roughly to handle her whom you should reverence, and, contrary to your duty, thus violently to lay hands and grip your Mistress, to whom you should be most obsequious, and of whose welfare you should be most careful, and at whose will and pleasure you should be most diligent and ready ? What kind of fury (mad wretches) hath inspired you to these rash dealings ? And thou, wicked Nurse, the cruel example and mean of all my miserable

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

griefs yet to come, why hast thou repugned my last designs ?

“ Why, dost not thou know that in procuring and helping forward my death thou hadst done me a greater pleasure and a better turn than in withholding me from it ? Wherefore, let this miserable part be played, and let the end of my tragical life be duly accomplished by me, and (if thou lovest me, as I think thou dost) leave me to mine own will ; leave me (I say) to mine own self to represent the last pageant of my doleful life. And (if thou art so pitiful and careful over me as thou showest) employ thy piety and study in saving my doubtful fame, and honour, which after my death shall still survive. Because in this piece of simple service, with which thou dost now hinder me, thy practice, pain and needless labour shall prove at length but vain. For dost thou think to take from me those sharp tools and cruel poniards with which I will at last broach this miserable heart of mine, and in whose points and edges consisteth the only hope of my desires ? Or else strangling cords, loathsome and swelling poisons, mortiferous herbs, choking rivers, burning coals and consuming flames ? What doth this vigilant care avail thee any more but to prolong a little this irksome life, and to reserve it to that kind of death (which even now, without touch or stain of infamy, might have set peace to my afflicted soul) which, by thy pitiless interruptions deferred,

THE FIFTH BOOK

thou shalt doubtless, at one time or other, make most infamous unto all the world, and most shameful unto me. Because death is in every place, and consisteth in everything. Let me, therefore, now die, lest, growing to a more gracious condition of life, with a more inhuman mind and cruel hand, I prepare for myself the most miserable and cruel death that may be."

Whilst, wretched Woman, I spake these words, I could not keep my hands still, but sometimes falling on one servant, and sometimes on another, catching some by their locks, I pulled the hair from their head, and fastening my nails in the faces of other some, I made the blood to spin out of their cheeks, tearing from other some their poor garments from their backs.

But (alas) neither the old Nurse nor the mangled servants answered me one word again, but, lamenting my senseless actions, executed their piteous functions towards me, whom then, with gentle words and entreaties, I endeavoured to gain to my will, which served my turn nothing at all.

Wherefore, like a frantic Hecuba, making a great noise, and with outrageous speeches, I began to exclaim, saying: "O wicked hands, and prone to all mischief, you, the adorners of my hurtful beauties, were a great occasion to make me become such an one as to seem so fair and pleasing in his eyes that I was desired of him whom I love most of all. Since,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

therefore, these evils have sprung by your help, in guerdon of this, use now your wicked cruelty upon my accursed body. Rent it in pieces and open it, and, dived in my hot blood, pull out from my accursed body my miserable heart and inexpugnable soul. Tear out (I say) this false heart, wounded with blind love. And since that all means of mortal and murdering instruments are taken from thee, with these revenging fingers (the adorners of my baneful beauties) and with these sharp nails piecemeal dismember, and without remorse of pity, rent it out." Alas that my bootless speeches did menace and promise me desired evils, and commended them to the execution of willing hands, but the vigilant care of prying servants, being always ready to the hindrance of them, withheld them against my will. And the mournful and importunate Nurse, with doleful speeches after all this, began thus to say :

"O dearest daughter, by these miserable breasts which were the sources of thy aliments, I humbly *Affectionate* pray thee, that with a quiet and appeased *comforts* mind thou wouldest give ear to my words. By them I will labour to mitigate thy passions that thou shalt not sorrow any more, or to drive quite away (perhaps) from thee the blind anger that doth incend thee to this kind of fury, or else, with a more remiss and calm mind to make thee suffer the same : or else speedily to forsake it. Wishing thee to reduce that to thy erred memory that shall revive

THE FIFTH BOOK

thee, and be no small health and great honour unto thee. It is therefore expedient for thee (good Lady), most famous for so rare virtues, as thou art endued with all the gifts of nature and fortune, not to be subject to pinching sorrow, nor (as a woman overcome) to turn thy back from daring dolours, from threatening mishaps and from pursuing woes.

“It is not a point of virtue to require death, and to call upon it, nor a part of magnanimity to be afraid of life, as thou art, but rather, *It is not virtuous to desire death and to be afraid of life* to countermand pressing evils, and to fly away before them, is not the part of a courageous and resolute mind. Whosoever doth abate his destinies, and doth contemn, divide and cast from him the profits, pleasures, contents and goods of his life (as thou hast done), I know not what need he hath to seek death, and cannot tell why he feareth life, since that the one and the other is a will of a timorous person. Now if into the dark dungeon of extreme misery thou dost desire wilfully to cast thyself, seek not death, because this is the last expeller and extinguisher of it. Let this foolish fury fly out of thy mind, by the which (methinketh) thou dost seek both to have and to lose thy lover. Why, dost thou believe (by being dissolved into nothing) to get him again?” To whom I answered not a word. But there was such a rumour spread throughout the wide house, and throughout the City, and country

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

round about, that all my servants (no otherwise than at the howling of some hungry wolf all the nearest inhabitants are wont to meet together) came running to me from every place, and all of them, affrighted with sudden sorrow, demanded what the matter was. But I had already forbidden them that knew it to tell anything at all. Wherefore, covering the horrible accident with a cunning lie, they rested all satisfied. My dear husband made haste thither, and my loving sisters, my careful parents and friends, with panting and fainting breasts, came running to me. And every one of them, equally deluded with a false tale, did (instead of a most wicked woman) repute and praise me for a holy Saint. And every one, after much weeping, first reproved my life punished with so much sorrow, labouring afterwards to comfort me up again. But from thenceforth it fell out that some believed I was haunted and stinged with some fury, and therefore like a mad woman continually watched me. But some, more pitiful than the rest, marking my mildness, and judging it (as it was indeed) but a certain grief of mind, with taking great compassion of me, laughed at that which the rest both did and said. And visited thus of many, I remained every day more amazed than other. And under the discreet guard of the sage Nurse I was closely kept. And as there is no anger so burning or so extreme but by course of time is made cold again,

THE FIFTH BOOK

so remaining certain days in this case (as I have set down), I came to myself at last again, and did manifestly know the Nurse's words to be true. And with bitter tears, therefore, I bewailed my past follies. But yet, although that the heat of my rage in time was spent, and became nothing, my love nevertheless did not one whit decrease, but tarried with me still by reason of the melancholy (used in other accidents before) which now continually I had, taking it grievously at the heart, to be forsaken for the unjust love of another woman. Wherefore I conferred with my Nurse oftentimes about this matter, and took counsel of her, desirous to find out some good means how to reclaim my old lover. And therefore sometimes I determined (by her advice) with pitiful letters to certify him of my sorrowful life and grievous misfortunes, and other sometimes we thought it more convenient, by some wise messenger, to let him understand of my daily woes, procured by his wilful absence. And truly although the Nurse was old, and the way very long and dangerous, yet she would for my sake have gone thither herself. But weighing everything well, we judged the letters, were they never so pitiful, were not of any efficacy to move him from these present new loves, so that we accounted those but lost labour. Admit that (for all this) I did sometimes write certain, which had the very same issue that we conjectured of before.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

To send the Nurse thither, I thought it as far from the purpose, because I did apparently perceive that she could never come to him alive, and to put my affiance and trust in another, I thought it too prejudicial to my honour and honesty. So that these first consultations were but frivolous. And there was not left any way in my mind to have him again but in my own person to go to him : to perform which enterprise there occurred divers things in my mind : all which by good reason were at last annihilated of my Nurse.

I thought sometimes to take the habit of a Pilgrim, and with some faithful companion and secret friend to seek him out in the very midst of his countries. And although this did seem possible unto me, notwithstanding, I did clearly see my honour to be in great hazard thereby, having heard how fair and wandering Pilgrims are oftentimes evilly abused of wicked ruffians and thieves, by the ways and in their travels. And besides this, knowing myself obliged to my good husband, without whom, or his leave, I could not conceive how to frame or how to take in hand this long journey, which thing to obtain in vain I might have hoped. Wherefore, I gave no place to this bootless invention. And therefore I was suddenly transported into another device, as inconvenient as the other was undecent for my estate before, and I imagined indeed that it should come to pass, and should verily have done it, if some

THE FIFTH BOOK

repugnant chance in the meantime had not happened, but hereafter (if I do but live) there shall not effectual practices be wanting to fulfil the drift of my pretences. I feigned in these my foresaid adversities, if the Gods had delivered me from them, to have made a vow, desiring to have performed the which, with just reason I might have travelled up and down in my lover his countries: passing through the which I had opportunity at will to see and to recall him back again: which I discovered to my dear husband, who willingly and lovingly offered to furnish me with necessaries in the same voyage, yet wishing me to attend a more convenient time. But the delays hereof being very grievous, and no less dangerous unto me, and fearing lest it might be suspected, and so detected a vicious and wicked journey and Pilgrimage, this (I say) caused me to enter into new imaginations, and into other counsels: all which seemed worser to me than the rest

By Hecate, which Proserpina denoteth, is understood art Magic alleged before, except only the marvellous and supernatural effects of Hecate with the which, because I might most safely commit myself to the fearful spirits, I had much talk and conversation, and with those especially whom I had heard were most skilful, and who themselves did boast to excel in art Magic, promising to perform and bring to pass what I would.

And some of them swearing to carry me suddenly

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

thither, others to wean his mind from all other loves, and to ingraft it in mine again, others telling that they would restore me to my former liberty, and myself desiring that the least of these might come to pass, I found them as full of tattling words and vain promises as their unperformed and simple deeds did manifest. Whereupon my flattering hope remained many times confused, and in suspense by them; and therefore, thinking it best of all to shake off these wicked drifts, I attended convenient time, in the which my husband promised me to fulfil my feigned vow.

THE SIXTH BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA



MY sorrows (notwithstanding the hope of my future voyage) were continued, and the sky, with continual motion carrying the Sun with it, did draw one day after another without any intermediate space of time. And vain hope held me in wavering doubts longer than I would, my great griefs and grievous love not any whit diminished. And now that Bull,

The description of the Springtide

which sometimes transported Europa, held Phœbus with his golden light, and the days borrowing light of the nights, of the shortest, became the longest. And flowery Zephyrus (arrived with his calm and peaceful blasts) had set the boisterous wars of Boreas in peace. And the stormy and dark tempests banished away with the cold air, and the white snow, discovering the tops of high hills and the plashy meadows (washed with the abundance of falling rain), had made every flower fairer, all grass to wax green, and generally had renewed all herbage. And that hoary whiteness, which all the cold winter season hath covered every tree, was now changed into a lively and fresh verdure. And in every place that season of the year

THE SIXTH BOOK

did reign when joyful Ver abundantly enricheth the earth with his wished and welcome treasures. And the ground (starred, as it were, and wrought with violets, marigolds and sweet roses) did seem to countervail the eighth heaven in beauty, and Narcissus did now begin to grow on every meadow, and

By the mother of Bacchus is understood the vine the mother of Bacchus also to show forth sprouting and fructiferous signs of her fertile womb, and did with her green burgeons (more than she was wont to do) overcharge her supporter and fellow Elm, himself also become now more heavy by his new garments. Driope, and the disastrous sisters of Phaeton, did also now show merry and cheerful countenances, having shaken off the miserable habit of hoary winter. The pretty birds, perching on every twig and bough, were heard to warble forth sweet and silver notes. And Proserpina her mother (that devout goddess of countrymen) joyfully waved up and down the fields with her goodly garments. And besides all these things my cruel Lord made every lusty, young and loving mind to feel the heat of his fiery darts hotter than before. Whereupon everyone, young Gentlewomen as well as gallant youths, adorning themselves (according to their degree) in the bravest manner and richest fashion of attire, endeavoured to please their best beloved. The merry feasts cheered up our Citizens, and filled all our City full of mirth, which were more magnificent and

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

copious than any that had been made in flourishing Rome of yore. And the Theatres, resounding with sweet songs and melodious sounds, did invite every lover to them. The Heroical young gentlemen sometimes mounted upon stately coursers, and proud Genets did run at Tilt and Joust in rich and complete Harness, and sometimes their pampered and headstrong Horses, trapped all over with a caparison of little silver and golden bells, did hotly fight at Tourney. And sometimes, proudly prancing up and down on them, with skilful hand did show how these foaming, fiery steeds with frothy bit should be managed and ridden. The young and wanton Ladies, with decked troops of beautiful Gentlewomen following them (desiring to see these sports), wearing fine garlands of new flowers about their heads, did lend sweet and gracious aspects to their gazing lovers, sometimes out of high windows, and sometimes from beneath their doors. Of which some with new gifts, others with a merry countenance, and some with sweet words, but generally all with some favour or other, did friendly honour their lovers and kindle greater flames in them. But I, like a stranger and forlorn woman, sitting by myself in a solitary place all alone, and comfortless for the decayed hope of my joyful times, did not a little sorrow with myself, but lament greatly and mourn.

Nothing pleaseth my melancholy fancies, no feast could make my heart merry nor afford any comfort to

THE SIXTH BOOK

my grievous thoughts or ease my complaints. My hands touched no green leaves, carried no sweet flowers in them, and cared as little to handle any joyful thing as my sorrowful eyes to behold them. And I became so peevish an emulatress that I envied at others' mirth, and with great desire did injuriously wish that every woman might be so entreated with love and served with such source of Fortune as I was. For with what a willing ear and with what great consolation do I remember that many times I have heard the recounted miseries and miserable mishaps that in times past and lately have befallen

*Fortune to
the afflicted
more often-
times shows
a merry
countenance*

to unfortunate lovers. But while the angry Gods held me in this cursed condition of life, deceitful Fortune, with greater woes to afflict miserable men, changing, as it were, in the midst of their adversities, showeth them sometimes a pleasant look, because, abandoning themselves and trusting more to her fawning smiles, they may fall into greater miseries when their momentary mirth beginneth once, and on a sudden to cease.

And so these ignorant fools, relying wholly upon her, at last perceive themselves thrown headlong down, as miserable Icarus in the midst of his flight, trusting too much to his waxed wings, and, mounted up to the highest skies, fell from thence into the sea called yet after his own name.

This frowning Fortune, I say, perceiving me

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

amongst such silly souls, not to be content with these past evils that she had given me, preparing worser for me, with a false and dissembled joy began to smile upon me and to mollify somewhat her paused anger: because recoiling a good way back she might (no otherwise than the hot rams of Africa in rutting time to give a greater dub) assail and hurt me the more.

And in this sort, with a certain vain gladness, I made truce for a season with my sharp and still sorrows. But my faithless lover having now tarried a great many months more than those four promised past and unperformed, it fell out that, sitting on a certain day all alone in my sorrowful chamber, though wearied with the overcloying company of
Lovers are sometimes comforted with one joy doleful thoughts, and accustomed lamentations, the old and feeble Nurse, with a more hasty pace than her aged limbs could well endure, came rushing in, her furrowed face all bewet with trickling sweat, and, setting herself down by me, her breast panting up and down, and her eyes expressing a certain kind of joyfulness in them, she began many times to speak, but the precedent faintness of her wearied pulmon did ever break off her words in the midst. To whom (with a mind full of suspicious wonder and fearful doubt) I said: "O dear Nurse, what meaneth this great labour and pains that thou hast taken, thus tired thyself with? What thing dost thou so earnestly

THE SIXTH BOOK

desire to tell, and with such haste, that first thou wilt not suffer thy breathless spirits to rest them? What, are they joyful or unlucky tidings? Shall I prepare myself to fly, to die, or what shall I do? Thy countenance (I know not how, nor wherefore) doth somewhat renew my drooping hope, but my affairs, hanging a long time in contrary suspense, persuade me to suspect more cruel mishaps, which are of common course and custom incident to miserable creatures. Tell me therefore quickly, and hold me no longer in doubt; resolve me what the occasion of this thy haste may import. Tell me whether any happy God or haggish fury hath driven thee hither."

Then the old woman, having yet scarce recovered her wind, interrupting my words, and more joyful than before, said: "O sweet daughter, rejoice; there is no cause of fear in my tidings. Shake off all grief and invest thy mourning mind again with thy shining robe of mirth; thy beloved and loving lover is returned. And Panphilus (Fiammetta) is at hand."

These angelical words entered so deep into my amazed mind, and filled it with such sudden joy, as my eyes did presently show an evident testimony of the same; but my pursuing grief and haunting miseries did incontinently bereave me of it and made me give no credit to them. Wherefore lamenting, I said: "O my dear Nurse, by those thy many years, and by thy aged body which long since hath desired eternal repose, I pray thee not to mock me

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

(a most miserable and distressed soul), of whose cares and griefs thou oughtest also to be partaker.

Impossible things For first will the clear rivers (I think) return to their first fountains, and Hesperus will bring clear day : first will Phœbe with her brother's beams give light to the dark night, before my ungrateful lover will return. Who doth not know (alas) that, disporting himself with his new mistress, he is lulled asleep in the secure cradle of all delights, enjoying his merry times and loving her more than ever he did me. And think, moreover (Fiammetta), that wheresoever he were now, he would return to her again, and therefore not likely to come from her whom he loveth so extremely, to me whom he infinitely hateth." But presently she added : " O Fiammetta, as the gods shall receive the parting soul of this withered and old body, thy careful Nurse doth not lie in one word she hath told thee. Nor doth it become one of my age, with such or like tales, to mock distressed women, and thee especially, to whom I owe all the duty and love I may." Then I replied and said : " How came these blessed news to thy ears, and how dost thou know them to be true ? Ah, tell me quickly, because if they seem probable in my jealous and doubtful mind, I may rejoice myself with the happy utterance and sweet accents of them." And rising from the place where I was a little gladder than before and somewhat cheered in mind, I sat

THE SIXTH BOOK

nearer to the Nurse, and then she said : “ Rising this morning very early about my proper business, which lay near to the Seashore, and earnestly musing on them, I went with a soft and slow pace, with my back turned towards the Sea, when a certain young Gentleman leaping ashore out of a late arrived ship, unadvised carried by the force of his skip, did boisterously and (as after I perceived) against his will fall against me. Wherefore I conjuring the Gods and with great choler turning towards him to blame him for this received injury, with humble words he meekly craved pardon at my hands.

“ But earnestly looking on him, and marking well his habit, I judged that he came from the coasts and country of thy beloved Panphilus, and therefore said to him : ‘ Gentleman (as the Gods may be favourable unto you), of courtesy tell me if you come from any foreign country.’ ‘ Yes, good woman, that I do,’ said he again. Then said I : ‘ Tell me from whence, good Sir, if it please you.’ And he said : ‘ From the coasts of Hetruria, and from the most noble City in the same I lately came, and of which I am.’ As soon as I heard this I then knew him to be Panphilus his countryman. Wherefore I asked him if he knew Panphilus and what was become of him.

“ And he answered that he did know him very well, and reported many good things to me in praise and commendation of him, and besides this said

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

that he had now come with him, if a little business had not stayed him there, but that (without all doubt) in a few days after he would come thither.

“In the meanwhile, that we were thus talking, all his companions that came belike with him leaping on shore, and ready to depart, he went away with them. I leaving apart all other business, with the greatest haste I could (thinking that I should not have lived so long until I had told thee of it) came hither breathless and panting as thou seest. Wherefore live now merrily once again, and exile these sad thoughts.” Which things, when she had spoken, with a most glad and joyful countenance I kissed her old forehead, and yet with a doubtful mind I many times afterwards conjured her, and did ask her again, if these news were true, wishing ever in mind that she should not tell the

*The manner
of those that
doubt*

contrary, and doubting lest she had deceived me. But after that many times with holy oaths she did swear that she had told me nothing more than truth, although that Ay and No went wavering up and down my suspicious head. Like a gladsome woman with these speeches I rendered immortal thanks to the Gods, saying :

“O supreme Jupiter, most royal rector and majestical sovereign of the high heavens. O luminate and radiant Apollo, from whom nothing is hid. O gracious Venus and most pitiful of thy subjects.

THE SIXTH BOOK

O sacred Boy carrying the golden and sweet darts, be ye all praised together and with equal honour magnified. Whosoever persevereth in your hope cannot perish in his long and doubtful travels. Behold by your favourable mercies, and not by my merits, my desired Panphilus doth return, whom I shall not so soon see, but that your altars (heretofore visited of me with most lamentable and pitiful prayers, and washed with bitter tears) shall now with my obsequious hands be perfumed with most sweet odours and precious incense. And to thee, Fortune, full of pity, turning now thy wrathful face away from my manifold evils, will I presently give, and erect, the promised image, with testimony of thy needful and imparted benefits.

“But most humbly obtesting you all with that humility and devotion which may make you most exorable, that you would deign to take away all unlucky occurrents possible to hinder my Panphilus in his determined journey, and to conduct him hither as safe and sound as ever he was heretofore.” My prayers finished (no otherwise than an unhooded Falcon), rousing myself up together, and clapping my hands, I began thus to say : “O amorous breasts, weakened with long consuming sorrows, cast away from henceforth all pinching cares, since that my dear lover (remembering me again) doth now return according to his promise.

“Drive away sorrow, harbour no fear, and shake

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

off the great shame that doth abound in afflicted and despised things, nor (as Fortune hath heretofore guided you) presume not to entertain any more grievous thoughts, but dissolve now into nothing the dark clouds of cruel destinies, and let every semblance and thought of my miserable times depart now from me ; let my merry and pleasant countenance return again, and be made capable to rejoice at this present felicity, and let old Fiammetta with her ruined soul be altogether blotted out of my memory." Whilst joyfully I spake these words with myself, my heart began yet to doubt (I know not what), and a sudden searching cold (being ignorant of the cause thereof) did overrun all my body, so that it counterchecked my will, ready to rejoice my mind.

Wherefore I remained a good while as one astounded in the very midst of my speech. Alas that *Miserable* this inconvenience and fault doth haunt *men never* miserable and afflicted souls, that they can- *believe glad-* not dispose and frame themselves to give *some things* credence to joyful things, apparent almost, and told them for their good and comfort. And admit that their happy fortune returned again, it is irksome nevertheless unto them to be merry at all, but believing it as a dream, they slenderly pass it away, as though it were not indeed. Wherefore, like one half amazed with myself, I began to say : " Who called me back again, or what forbade me

THE SIXTH BOOK

from my new commenced joy ? What, doth not Panphilus return ? Truly yes.

“ Who doth therefore command me to mourn again ? There is no way now left, nor do I see any occasion to new make me fall into my old sadness. Who doth therefore forbid me to deck myself with new flowers, and to adorn my fine body with rich robes ? Alas, I know not, and yet I am forbidden (I know) by some secret suggestion of sorrow, and relic of hidden grief, of which my soul is not yet clearly purged.”

And standing on these doubtful points, and in this sort against my will, as though I had not been in myself, in the midst of all my doubtful errors great store of tears fell from my eyes, and in the chiefest of my new merry mood my accustomed lamentations abruptly disturbed it. And thus my long afflicted heart did by the ever-running conduits of my eyes send forth her wonted and wasteful tears.

And my unconstant mind (divining as it were of ensuing misery and of worse mishaps) did with great *Signs of a mind divining things to come* grief and lamentations (like the Sicilian hill) evaporate many scalding sighs and sobs, most manifest signs, by the which I do now certainly know, that then there is some great and stormy tempest near at hand, when, without any blast of turbulent winds, the wary Seamen perceiveth the calm and quiet seas begin to swell. But

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

yet desirous to overcome that which my mind would not, I said : " O miserable woman, what ill news and what misfortunes to come needless dost thou feign in thy suspicious mind ? Say that this which thou foretellest of may happen to thy doubting mind of consequent mishaps, thou fearest (alas) too late, and without any profit at all."

From these words (therefore) ever after I applied my mind wholly to a new kind of mirth, and I did (as well as I could) extinguish all melancholic thoughts. And warning my faithful Nurse to be diligent about Panphilus his return, I changed my mourning weeds into gorgeous and gallant vestments, and began to wax very curious, and careful of myself, because lest by my long affected countenance and disordered attire I might not at his return seem unlovely in his eyes.

My pale and lean cheeks began to recover their lost and lively colour, and recovering their forsaken plumpness, began to wax round again. And my tears now dried up, took away with them also those red and purple rainbows which encompassed my eyes round about : the which, being returned into their due places, received again their whole and perfect lights.

And my withered cheeks, being somewhat broken and worn by continual streams of tears that washed them, grew again to their old and former softness. And my neglected hair, although not suddenly they

THE SIXTH BOOK

became not golden, they wanted not now their accustomed frizzlings and dainty deckings to make them look so passing fair as once they did. And my dear and costly apparel, having a long time lain unworn in sweet Indian presses, did now bravely set forth my seemly body. What more ? In brief, I turned *The effects of them that return to be joyful again* my pains to pleasures, my griefs to gladness, my sighing to singing, my mourning to mirth, and made a renovation of myself, and of all things else that belonged to me. And I made myself almost as beautiful as once I was, first, and brought myself wellnigh to my former estate and happiness of life, insomuch that the Gentlewomen my near neighbours, my dear kinsfolks, and my loving husband marvelled not a little at this sudden change, saying to themselves :

“ What inspiration hath drawn her from so long sorrow, and mitigated thus her continual melancholy, which neither by sweet and effectual comforts, nor by friendly and loving requests, could heretofore be driven out of her obstinate mind. This is surely no less than a miracle.” And as they wondered much at it, so were they also very glad of this sudden alteration. All my family, being very heavy a long time for my continual tribulation, began with me to rejoice now again, and as my errors were altered, even so it seemed that all things with the same were changed from sorrow into solace. The days, which erst I thought longer than they were wont to be, did

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

(by reason of the hope which I had of Panphilus his return, seeming now longest of all unto me) pass away (methought) with the slowest course that might be. Nor the first were so well counted of me, but with greater care and diligence I marked these. In space of which time, sometimes sitting with myself all alone, and thinking of my past cares and careful thoughts, I did now chiefly condemn them, saying :

“ Oh, how hardly of late have I thought of my dear lover, how rashly have I condemned his long staying, and how foolishly have I believed that he was wholly given over to the liking and love of another woman, induced thereunto but by the slender report of one of my lying servants. Accursed therefore be their buzzing tales. O Gods, how can men with such open and impudent countenances tell abroad false and shameless lies ? But everything (Fiammetta) should with more sound advice of thy own part have been considered, than so soon and so easily to have given belief unto them. I should (alas) have counterpoised the faith of my lover so many times sworn and promised to me, and as many times again with affectionate tears avowed, and should have weighed the love that he bare me, and yet doth, with their fabulous words, false rumours and base credits, in the equal balance of my right judgment, who (without any sacrament of urged oath, and myself not caring to inquire further, and not desirous to know

THE SIXTH BOOK

any more than that they spake) told only the bare reports of others and with asseveration only of their first opinions and superficial knowledge, which do now manifestly appear to be erroneous and false.

“One alleging that he did see a young gentlewoman go into Panphilus his father’s house, because he knew not any other young gentleman perhaps there but him, and not thinking of the unseemly and common wantons of old dotards, or else (ignorant (perhaps) of her alliance with them) believed by and by that she was his wife, and so without any more ado told it her who therefore did believe it, because she took but little heed and care of him that told it. Another, because he perceived him sometimes to eye some fair Gentlewoman, or else to dally with her, which (might be) was his Kinswoman, or someone with whom he was familiarly and honestly acquainted, did judge her to be his also, and affirming it again with simple words to me, I did, like a simple Woman, believe the same. Oh, that I had most duly pondered these things in my mind, how many tears, what infinite sighs, and what extreme grief had I never felt. But what thing can an enamoured and silly Woman advisedly ponderate in her mind, and directly do? As sundry forces assail us, so do they toss and turn our minds to every change. And simple Lovers easily believe all things. Because love is a passion full of care and fear. For by continual use they addict themselves always to hurtful accidents,

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

and desiring many things, believe most possibilities, contrary to their troubled fancies, so fixing their
Love is a irremovable minds upon the first that to
thing full the second reports, and things, they give
of care and small belief, or none at all. But I am to
fear be held excused ; and therefore I always prayed the
Gods that they would make me a liar in my fond
imaginations and belief.

“ But behold my prayers are heard, and he shall never understand these words which I have spoken against him, which, if he did know, he could say nothing else but that they proceeded from the fervent love I bare him. For how dear a thing should it be to him to hear of my torments and grief of mind, and to know of my past and prevented perils for his sake, because these are most true arguments of my undoubted love and faith ; and I can scarce think otherwise but that he hath tarried so long, and to none other end, but only to prove if with a constant mind I could (without forgetting him) attend his coming again. Behold, therefore, and with what force of mind I have expected him. Wherefore from henceforth, when he shall perceive with what pain and tears, and with how many millions of martyring thoughts I have looked for him, love shall be born anew again in him, and no other God. Ah, when shall it come to pass that he (being once arrived) shall see me, and I him again ?

“ O ye Gods, which from your high thrones

THE SIXTH BOOK

contemplate all things here beneath, may I temper and moderate my eager desire, from embracing his body before all men as soon as I shall see him. Truly I believe I shall hardly do it. *God seeth all things* O bounteous Gods, when shall it be that, enfolding him straitly between mine arms, I shall render him treble again those kisses which at his departure he gave to my dying lips, without any exchange for them again ! Certes, the presage which I noted, that I was not able to bid him farewell, is now true, and by that the Gods have very well declared to me his return. O ye gracious Gods, when will that time come when I may joyfully recount unto him the Seas of salt tears, and the worlds of woes, which I have passed, and worn out, and when shall I know the occasion of his long and sorrowful absence ? Shall I live so long ? Alas, I scarcely think it. Ah, let that day come quickly, because death (not long since so often called and procured of me) doth now terrify me, which (if possibly my prayers can enter into his ears) I humbly beseech, that flying far from me, he would let me spend the remainder of my young years in joy and pleasure with my beloved Panphilus." I was therefore very careful that no day should pass me wherein I did not employ my whole study and diligence to be very inquisitive of Panphilus his return, and to hear also of some true news of him. And my dear Nurse was not negligent in seeking out the young Gentleman, and

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

bringer of these glad tidings, because she might with more sureness be ascertained of that which she had told me, which thing she did not only once, but as oftentimes as conveniently she could, and (as many times as she had done before) she did always bring me word, that his return was nigh at hand. Wherefore I did not only expect the promised time, but, proceeding a little further, I did imagine it possible that he was now come. And therefore a hundred times in the day I did run sometimes beneath to the door, and sometimes to the window, looking round about me a great way if I might perceive him come. And I saw not any man coming afar off that way that he should come but I did verily imagine that it was he, and with great desire did look on him so long until, coming nearer unto me, I might easily perceive that it was not he. Whereat being somewhat grieved in mind, I looked out to see if any other came, and sometimes one and now another passing by, and seeing that none of them was he, I remained (my greedy desire and hope deceived) full of confusion, and very angry with myself.

And if I was perhaps called into the house, or else by some other urgent occasion went from the window, a hundred thousand thoughts (as if a multitude of dogs grinding their teeth at me had bitten my soul) did sting and molest me, saying to myself: "Alas, even now (perhaps) he goeth by, or else is

THE SIXTH BOOK

already passed, whilst thou art here busied about not so contented an office": and immediately I

Read
Ariosto of
her that
attended the
return of
her lover

went again to see if I could see him come, making it but a short time between going down to the door and running quickly up to the window again. Ah, poor soul, and wretched Woman, how much sorrow

and how many troubles didst thou sustain for him whom, hourly looking for, thou couldest never perceive to come. But after that the day was come in which my Nurse told me that he should arrive, and of the which she had so often foretold me, I adorned myself no otherwise than Alcmena did when she heard that her Amphitryon was at hand, and with my mastering hand left not anything in me unbeautified, but set forth in the best and bravest order, and in the finest fashion.

And I could scarce keep myself in from going to the Sea side because I might the sooner see him, because (also) I heard certain news of the arrival of those Galleys in the which my Nurse understood, and certified me, that he should come. But thinking with myself that the first Saint that he would visit on shore was myself, I (therefore) bridled my earnest and hot desire. But in fine (as I rightly guessed) he came not at all: whereupon I began beyond all measure to marvel, and in the midst of my late joy arised in my mind divers kinds of doubts, which were not so easily overthrown by superficial sup-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

positions of his coming, or by any other shadows of gladsome thoughts. After a little while, therefore, I sent the old Woman to know what was become of him, and whether he was come or not : who went, as it seemed, with such an unwilling mind, and with as slow a pace, which did divine of some consequent and sorrowful tidings. Wherefore I accursed many times with myself, and with great anger blamed her crooked steps and aged paces. Who, staying but a little time abroad, came to me again with a sorrowful cheer and dull gait.

Alas, when I saw her come in this sort I could hardly contain my soul in my body, and therefore suddenly imagined that my Lover was dead
Signs of one that bringeth ill news by the way, or else that he was arrived very sick. The colour of my face changed a thousand times in one instant, and going to meet the dreaming Nurse, I said unto her : “Tell me quickly what news dost thou bring. Doth my Lover live ?” She changed not her gait, nor answered me one word. And being now entered into my Chamber, and setting herself down, looked me very pitifully in the face. Wherefore every part of my body being shaken, like the tender Aspen leaves by some soft wind, I did being now to tremble, and hardly restraining my tears, I crossed mine arms, and did put my hands into my sorrowful bosom, saying :

“ If thou dost not tell me quickly what this thy

THE SIXTH BOOK

sorrowful countenance doth mean, and what these sad signs which thou dost bring with thee do signify, there shall not any part of my garments remain whole to my body, nor hair untorn from my head. What secret occasion therefore may it be that moveth thee from telling it, but only that which I fear will prove ominous unto me. Conceal it no longer, but declare it, whilst I am attending for worse. What (tell me at a word), liveth my Panphilus?" She, pricked on by my angry words and threatenings, with a low voice, and looking down to the ground, said: "He liveth." Then said I again: "Wherefore dost thou not tell me quickly? What envious accidents stay him from coming hither? Why dost thou hold me in suspense and wavering amidst a thousand fearful surmises? Is he sick with any malady? Or what froward occasion doth withhold him that, being come out of the Galley, he doth not come to see me?" Then she said: "I know not whether want of health or any other mischance doth detain him." Then said I again: "Hast thou not seen him, or is he not yet come?" "I have seen him," said she, "and he is come, but not the same whom we did expect." "How art thou sure," said I, "that he is not my Panphilus? Hast thou seen him at any other time, and didst thou now behold and mark him well?" "Truly," said she, "I did never see him that I wot of, but being even now brought unto him by that young Gentleman who told me the first news

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

of his return, and telling him that I had oftentimes inquired for him, he asked me what I would with him. 'His health and welfare,' said I. And I demanding of him how his old Father did, and in what estate the rest of his things stood, and what was the cause of his long staying since his departure, he answered that he never knew his Father, and that he was a

Posthumous is he that is born after his Father's death posthumous-born, and that all his things were in good plight, and that he had never been here before, and did mean to stay here but a small time. These things made

me to wonder, and doubting, lest I was deceived, I asked him his name, which courteously and plainly he told me; and I no sooner heard it but immediately I perceived, by the identity and likeness of it with the name of thy beloved Panphilus, both thee and myself to be greatly deceived."

When I heard these things (most pitiful Ladies) mine eyes forsook their lights, and every sensitive

Effects of a sudden passion spirit, for fear of death, went their ways, and falling down in the place where I sat, there remained no more force in my body

than was scarce able to breathe forth one poor Alas. Which, when the miserable old Woman perceived, lamenting greatly, and calling the rest of my Women about me, carried me like a dead woman to my bed, and there labouring to reduce my wandering spirits with cold water, believing a great while together to recover life, and yet misdoubting also the same, they

THE SIXTH BOOK

watched me with diligent care. But after that my forsaken forces came to me again, and after I had poured forth many tears and sighs, I asked the sorrowful Nurse another time if it were so as she had said. And besides this, remembering with myself how wary and discreet Panphilus was wont to be, and suspecting that he had wisely and of purpose made himself unknown to the Nurse, with whom he had never talked in his life before, I willed that she should describe unto me the countenance, the feature, the gesture, the personage and the fashions of that Panphilus with whom she had talked. But she, affirming first with an oath that it was no less and no otherwise than she had told me, declared to me afterwards in order his stature, the lineaments of his body and face, and, last of all, the manner of his apparel. All which (alas) made me give too great faith to that which the old woman told me.

Wherefore, thrust off from all hope, I re-entered into my former woes, and rising up like a frantic Woman I pulled off my sumptuous garments of joy, and laid aside my once dear but now unpleasant ornaments, and my frizzled shining hair, with an envious Hecuba hand, I tore out of order, and did carelessly ruffle them together, and despising all comfort, I began most bitterly to complain of my incessant and miserable mishaps, and with cruel words to condemn my failed hope, and to blame

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

the good thoughts and like concealed opinions of my untrue and wicked Lover.

And, in brief, I returned wholly to my old life of miseries, and had a more earnest and fervent desire of death than before, which I had not escaped (as yet I have), but that the hope of my intended voyage, with no little force, withheld me from performance of it.

*Hope doth
still keep
one in life*

THE SEVENTH BOOK OF BOCCACE HIS FIAMMETTA

N this kind of life, therefore (most pitiful Ladies), I have remained, as by the recounted and passed accidents you may gather. And by how much my ungrateful Lord doth see my hope fly from me, by so much the more doth he work stranger effects in me than he was wont to do, and, blowing with more hot desires the glowing coals of love in my smothered breast, doth make them greater than before, which, as on the one side they do mightily increase, so are my pains and sorrows on the other by like proportion augmented, which, never being with due ointment assuaged of me, are by my own will and follies made more grievous and insupportable; and being more sharp do more afflict my sorrowful and woeful mind. And I doubt not (but following their headlong course) they will at length, with some honest mean, open me the way of death, which heretofore I have so long and unfeignedly desired. But yet having my assured hope, as I have already said, in my pretended voyage to find and see him (ah, that ungrateful Panphilus, I mean) who is the original of all this, I did not seek to mitigate them, but was

THE SEVENTH BOOK

rather now resolved (as well as I could) constantly to endure them. For performance of which I found out one only possible way amongst many others, which was, to compare and measure my pains with theirs who had likewise passed such brunts as myself fighting under the amorous ensigns and in the dolorous battles of love: whereof I think to reap a double commodity.

*To resemble
one's pain
with an-
other's griefs
is a lighten-
ing of sorrow*

First, in knowing myself not the first, nor to be alone afflicted with misery, as not long since my Nurse, in her alleged comforts, told me. Secondly, that every grief, pain and pang of their love being (in my judgment) sufficiently recompensed, I determined and resolved with myself to pass away ever after with my former, every other grief whatsoever; which I reckon no little glory to me, when I may say that I am only she that living hath sustained more grief and misery than any other woman. And with this kind of glory (forsaken yet of everyone as extreme misery indeed and of myself (alas) if I could otherwise do), in this sort, as you shall hear, I passed away my melancholy times. I say, therefore, that, martyred with these continual anguishes, and considering well of others who have not been exempted from the like, the painful loves of Inachus his daughter (who, being first a tender and delicate damsel, and passing lovely and beautiful, did seem lively to represent me) came to my mind, and after-

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

wards her great good hap and happy felicity, in that she was not meanly beloved of mighty Jove. Which thing doubtless could not be of her only, but every woman also accounted a great glory and praise. Afterwards considering how she was metamorphosed into a Cow, and how, by the severe command of jealous Juno, she was kept of vigilant Argus, I did judge her to be beyond all measure tormented with great anxieties and grief of mind. And certes, I am of opinion that her griefs did greatly exceed mine, if that for her company and comfort she had not had sometimes the assistance of her loving God. And who doth doubt, if I had the sweet company of my lover, who might any time have helped me in these ruthful passions, or that he had but sometimes taken any little pity of me, that any woes whatsoever could have annoyed me so, as they have continually done. Besides this, her end made her passed and approved sorrows very light. Because Argus being killed by her lover's messenger, and she transported lightly with her heavy body into Egypt, and returned there to her own shape again and married to Osiris, she saw herself at last installed in the Imperial diadem, and like a happy Queen, to sway the regal sceptre of Egypt. If I could but think, or hope, though in my old age to see my Panphilus once again, I would say that my griefs were not to be compared with the sorrows of this Lady. But the Gods only know if this good

THE SEVENTH BOOK

fortune shall ever hap to me or no, howsoever with false hope in the meantime I delude and flatter myself. Next to her the unfortunate love of Biblis is represented unto my thoughts, *The greater part of these fables are in Ovid* whom (methink) I see forsake all her wealth, joy and pleasure to follow unflexible Caunus. And with these I bethink myself also of wicked Mirrha, who, after the detested fruition of her odious loves, flying from her angry Father, who pursued her with menaces of just death, plunged also into that misery.

I behold also dolorous Canace, who, after the miserable birth of her incestuous conception, looked for nothing less but death. And thinking well with myself of their several sorrows, I did doubtless esteem them to be extreme, although their loves were but filthy and abominable lusts. But if I am not deceived I see them all ended, or else in short space to be terminated. Because Mirrha flying away, having the Gods pitiful of her pains, and answerable to her desires, was without delay transformed into a tree of her own name.

And she never after (although it doth continually distil Amber tears, as she did at the very instant when her form was changed) felt any of her former pains and complaints. And as the occasion of her sorrows did arise, so the cause of their privation was not also wanting. Biblis, likewise (as some say), without any longer delay, ended her doleful days with a cruel

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

halter : admit that others hold that by great favour of the Nymphs (who did commiserate her hard destinies) she was turned into a fountain of her own name, till this day yet keeping the same.

And this befell to her when she knew that Caunus denied her her desires, and scornfully rejected her company, and with frowning brows reproved her wicked suits. What shall I say in showing my own pains, greater (alas) than those that molested Biblis, and more grievous than those that Mirrha had, but that the brevity of them hath had no small advantage over the length of mine. Those therefore well considered, the pitiful loves of hapless Pyramus and Thisbe were next objected to my remembrance, of whom (I cannot but take great compassion), imagining them both to be young, and with great trouble and many sorrows, to have burned in each other's love, and labouring with mutual presence to have reaped the fruit of their fervent desires, which with untimely death and in short time were equally dissolved.

Oh, what a pitiful thing is it to think what grief pierced poor Pyramus his heart when in the silent time of night, finding his dear Thisbe's robes bloody and torn of the wild beast at the foot of the Mulberry tree, near unto the fountain and appointed meeting place, by these dismal and unexpected tokens he surely thought that she was devoured. The sheathing, certes, of his own sword in his impatient breast

THE SEVENTH BOOK

did show it manifestly enough. Afterwards discouraging in my mind the wounding thoughts of miserable Thisbe beholding her lover wallowing in his own gore, and panting yet with declining life, I think them to be so grievous, and imagine her tears also to be such burning drops, that I can hardly believe that there were ever any (mine own excepted) that did torment and scald more than hers. Wherefore these two (as it is now said) in the very beginning of their griefs and loves did end the very same. Oh, thrice happy souls if that in the other world, as in this, their perfect and firm love doth still remain inviolate. And so the pains, cares and infinite woes of all their former love could not be equivalent with the delights and content of their eternal company.

After these the grief of forsaken Dido entered with greater force and deeper consideration into my mind, because her condition did of all others most resemble mine. I imagined how she was building of Carthage, and studying with great Majesty to dictate laws in Juno's temple to her new people; and how she gave bountiful entertainment to Æneas, a stranger unto her by envious tempests of the Sea weatherbeaten and cast upon her Lybian shores; and how she was enamoured of his brave personage, and passing virtues; and at last how she committed both herself and all hers to the disposition and pleasure of that Trojan Duke, who, having used her royal Palaces at his pleasure, and soaked

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

himself in all manner of delices in her country, she being every day more and more inflamed with his love, abandoning her at last, departed from thence. Oh, how much without compare did she seem miserable in my conceit, beholding her looking from her highest turrets towards the sea, covered with disanchored ships of her flying and unpitiful lover.

But I judge her more impatient than dolorous when I think of her cruel death. And, certes, at the first departure of my Panphilus I felt (in my opinion) the very selfsame grief as she did on the sudden endure at the sailing away of false Æneas. Oh, that it had so pleased the Gods that I, as unable to endure my grief as she was hers, had with some sudden death ended my loathed life, so that by these means I might have delivered myself from these pains and sorrows, as she did herself, which afterwards (by default thereof) did continually cleave in sunder my afflicted heart. After the miserable thoughts and the ruthful chances of unhappy Hero of Sesto came to my mind, whom (methought) I saw coming down from her highest Tower to the Sea banks and rocks, where she was wont sometimes to meet and receive her well-beloved and wearied Leander into her arms.

And even there again (methinks) I see her with what a pitiful and pale countenance she beheld her lover lying dead before her, driven first on shore by a friendly Dolphin, all naked, and soused in brinish

THE SEVENTH BOOK

waters, and laid along upon the Sea sands, and wiping with her garments the salt water from his pale visage, and drowning him the second time with the flowing streams of her swelling tears. Ah, what great pity doth her cruel passages find in my sorrowful mind. More truly than any of those of the foresaid ladies, and sometimes so much that, forgetting my own woes, I did weep and lament for hers.

And lastly, could I conceive no means for her comfort but one of these two, either to die, or else

*Sorrow
ceaseth when
hope is past
to regain the
thing which
is lost* to forget him, as other dead men have been : in taking either of which her sorrows (I think) might have easily been finished. Considering that no lost thing, in recovering of which again there is no hope left,

can grieve us any long time. But yet the Gods forbid that this kind of comfort should happen to me, which if it did come to pass, no counsel in such a case should avail but that which persuaded me once to a resolute and hasty death. For during the time that my Panphilus liveth, whose life his happy stars and predominant planets preserve as long as he himself doth desire, that cannot (I hope) nor shall not befall unto me. But seeing the intercourse of mundane things in continual motion, this belief is added to my hope, that in the end, or else (perhaps) before, he shall return, and be mine again, as once he was. Which lingering hope not coming to effect, doth hourly make my life grievous and

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

irksome unto me. And by thus much therefore I esteem myself oppressed with greater sorrow than she was. I remember that in *French Rhymes* metres, to which if any credit may be lent, I have sometimes read that Sir Tristram and Lady Isotta have more than any other lovers mutually and fervently loved each other, and with their changing delights have had great misfortunes and adversities intermingled, even in the flourishing and bravest time of their youth, who, because, loving greatly together, they have tasted both of one end, it seems most credible that not without extreme sorrow and bitter grief on both sides they forsook their worldly delights.

Which may be easily granted if, in abandoning this world, they thought that in the other the same could not be found or had. But if they had this opinion, that they were as ample and common in the other (as they had indeed), then it is to be thought that death had rather afforded them some great content and joy than any sorrow and fear at all. For what certainty of grief may one give with testimony of a thing which he never proved? None at all, truly. In Sir Tristram his arms was his own death, and the death of his Lady also.

For if, in embracing her body so straitly and lovingly, it had grieved her at all, in opening his arms again, the pain (no doubt) had ceased. And yet for all this, let us admit and say, that it is by

THE SEVENTH BOOK

great reason most fearful and grievous to taste of : what grief can we say to be absolutely in a thing that doth come to pass but only once, and which doth occupy but a little space of time ? Certes, none. Sir Tristram therefore and Isotta in one hour ended their delights and dolours. The continued time of my stretching grief and lasting sorrow hath without comparison greatly exceeded the brevity of my enjoyed mirth and joys. But amongst the number of these foresaid lovers my mind did think of miserable Phedra, who, with her voluntary and advised fury, was the occasion of his most cruel death whom she loved more than herself. And I know not truly what damage and great inconvenience did follow her of such a great fault, but I am certain, if the like had ever happened to me, there had been nothing but violent death that might expiate the guilt thereof. But if she lived, she buried him afterward in dark oblivion, as commonly all things (as even now I said) are wont to be forgotten by death. And besides these sorrows which Laodamia, Deiphyle, Argia, Evadne and Deianira, and many others felt, followed hers in my scanning thoughts : all which, either by violent death or by necessary oblivion, received some comfort at last.

And who doubteth that burning fire, red-hot iron and melted lead doth not grievously burn and scald his finger who doth but suddenly dip it in and doth quickly pull it out again ? Why, none I think.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

And yet this is nothing to that extreme pain whose whole body is in either of these tormented and plunged for a good space together : wherefore how many soever I have described above in woes, sorrows and pains, the same may be said to be but a momentary while in their superficial and counterfeit griefs, whereas I have really felt them, continually been in them, and am not yet free from them. Wherefore all these foresaid woes, in respect of mine, have been but amorous annoyances. But besides these miserable women, the no less sorrowful tears poured forth of those who with the unexpected brunts of cruel fortune have been confounded came before mine eyes.

And these are those of Jocasta, Hecuba, Sophonisba, Cornelia and Cleopatra. Oh, how much misery (considering well the miserable success of Jocasta's loves) do we see befallen unto her in all her lifetime, possible enough to have daunted and troubled the most stout and strongest mind. For she being very young was married to Layus, King of Thebes, who commanded that her first child should be thrown out to be devoured of wild Beasts, the miserable Father thinking by this to have prevented that which the heavens and his inevitable destinies with infallible course had prepared for him. Oh, what a grief (must I needs think) that this was to her soul, considering the degree of her that sent it, and that

THE SEVENTH BOOK

with her own hands she was constrained to deliver, and to send it to a cruel kind of death : and afterwards certified, by them that carried her unfortunate infant, of his mangled and devoured corpse, with what intolerable grief she believed that he was dead indeed. And to see her hapless Husband most miserably slain of him whom he had engendered in her own bowels, and that she herself afterwards, espoused to her unknown Son, had by him four children. And so how almost in one hour she saw herself mother and wife to this wicked Parricide : whom after she had perfectly known, when she saw him deprived first of his eyes, and last of his kingdom, and how his execrable fact and detested life was published to the whole world. In what miserable plight her soul was then, oppressed now with many years, which were rather desirous of repose than meet to be diminished with restless anguish, she may well think, and judge, who hath been tossed with the greatest or with like griefs of mind. But yet her dispiteous and cruel Fortune heaped upon her extreme misery greater and more bitter woes. For seeing the yearly intercourse and successive reign of her two Sons, with mutual composition divided between them, and afterwards the faithless brother pinned up in the City ; and seeing the greatest part of Greece under the regiment of seven kings : lastly, after many bloody battles, consuming fires, miserable spoil of Virgins, wives and goods : when she beheld one of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

her prodigious Sons unnaturally to embrew his sword in his own brother's blood, and when, her Husband's Son driven out and exiled into another Kingdom, she saw the ancient and old walls of her noble City, builded first by the sweet harmony of Amphitryon his Cythera, pitifully ruined and beaten down : and how her late flourishing kingdom was miserably divided and utterly dissolved : and having hanged herself, left perhaps her Daughter in a most ignominious and shameless life. What could the angry Gods, the world, froward Fortune, and the malicious Hags of hell have conspired more against her ? Nothing, certes, in my opinion.

For let that ghastly place be surveyed, and every torture therein duly considered, and yet I hardly believe that there could not in the same such extreme torments and pains be found. Wherefore I approve and say that every and least particle of her anguish and of her fault to be most grievous, and no less impious. And as there is no woman that would judge that my grief were not to be compared to the greatness of this, so (truly) would I also say, had not mine been amorous.

For who doubteth but that she knew (seeing the abominable crimes of her wicked house, and of unnatural Husband (worthy of the condign anger of the Gods), that duly scanned these adverse accidents) these horrible accidents to be meritorious punishments for such heinous guilt and barbarous impiety ?

THE SEVENTH BOOK

None truly, that would judge her to be in her right wits. And if she were but a fool she felt her griefs the less, because (not fully knowing the weight of them) they could not so greatly grieve her. And whosoever knoweth herself worthy of such calamities and troubles that she endureth, with little grief, or none at all, she resolveth with herself more patiently to pass them away. But I never committed anything wherewith the Gods might justly be offended with me, having with continual offerings honoured them, and with holy victimy besought their divine graces, never despising their Godheads, as in times past the Thebans most wickedly did. But perhaps someone may well object and say : How canst thou affirm that thou hast not deserved punishment, or that thou hast not committed any fault ? Why, hast thou not violated the holy laws, and with an adulterous youth defiled thy marriage bed ? Yes, truly.

But if this matter be well propounded, as I have not myself only done this crime, so doth it not deserve (I think) so great punishment, and such grievous pains. Because she must think that I, being a tender young Gentlewoman, was not able to gainsay and resist that which the strongest men in the world, nay the Gods themselves, could not do.

And as I am not the first that hath committed such a friendly fault, so am I not alone, and shall not be the last, but having almost all Women in the world my companions in this excusable error, I am

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

not so greatly to be condemned for the same. And those laws which I have infringed are of common course wont favourably to pardon a multitude.

My fault, moreover, as it was most secret, so it should not therefore be so severely and thoroughly punished. And besides all this, say that

A secret fault is half pardoned the Gods were justly stirred up to wrath against me, and did seek to give me sharp

corrections for my great offences, were it not a greater part of justice, and more reason, to punish him who was the occasion of my fall? Now, whether

He that is the occasion of sin ought worthily to be punished burning and lawless love, or Panphilus his rare beauty, brave personage and qualities induced me to corrupt the sacred laws of

wedlock, I know not, but knowing too too well that both the one and the other were of most great force to torment me most strangely. So that this now did not happen by the sin committed, but is rather a new grief and sequestered from the rest, more cruelly cruciating the patient and sustainer of it than any other.

The which, moreover, if the Gods for my committed offence had given me, they should do contrary to their right judgment and accustomed manner, in that they should not with the sin recompense the punishment, which being compared to the due pains of Jocasta, and to her deserved defaults, and considering mine own errors, and the severe punishment which I do suffer for the same, she must

THE SEVENTH BOOK

needs be said to be but slightly punished, and myself with too rigorous chastisement, and unmeasurable pain, to be corrected. Nor let not any take hold of this, that she was bereaved of her Kingdom, deprived of her Sons, despoiled of her Husband and, last of all, of her own life, and I but only of my Lover. All which truly I confess.

But spiteful Fortune carried away with this Lover all my felicity, though that (which perhaps in other men's sight and judgment was accounted happiness) hath still remained with me, and which is clean contrary to my desires. Because my Husband, my parents, my riches, and all things else besides are a most grievous burden unto me, and nothing congruent with my wished content. Which things if she had taken from me, as she did my Lover, there had then remained a most open way for me to have fulfilled my desires, which undoubtedly I would have followed. By which if I could not have brought to pass my will, then were there a thousand kinds of deaths ready for me, to have rid me from all my woes and miseries. Wherefore I justly think that my pains are much more greater than any of the foresaid.

Methinks that next after these I see Hecuba coming to my mind, passing sorrowful in her countenance, who escaped from that general ruin, and surviving only to behold the doleful and destroyed Relics of so goodly a kingdom, the subversion of such an admirable City, the cruel

Hecuba

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

death of so Princely a Husband, of so many renowned Sons, and most fair daughters, to see the destruction of so many magnanimous Nephews, valiant Cousins and Allies, the rapine of so great riches, the havoc of infinite treasure, the spoil of so many Virgins, the ravishment of wives, and of all sorts of Women, the extinction of such excellency, the loss of so many Kings hewed and slain right down, such bloody massacres and pitiful stratagems, of the dismayed and betrayed Trojans, the impiety perpetrated in the Temples—polluted, battered and made plane with the ground—and the indignity and irreverence done to their dishonoured and chased Gods. And seeing herself to be old, and sorrowfully recalling to her wounded mind what mighty Hector was, what valiant Troilus, what doughty Deiphobus, and what her youngest darling, Polydorus, and the shining virtues of many noblemen more, and how unfortunately she saw them all die; remembering also how the generous blood of her late mighty and majestic Husband was cruelly shed in her own lap before the holy Altars, and how she saw fatal Troy, whilom reared up to the skies with stately Towers, famous for magnificent buildings, full of princely Palaces, and very populous with noble and worthy Citizens, consumed with devouring flames and wholly razed from the earth.

And besides all this, the pitiful sacrifice of her fair Daughter Polyxena, offered up by unpitiful Pyrrhus,

THE SEVENTH BOOK

to the shadow of Achilles. Oh, with what excessive grief and anguish of mind (must we needs think) that she beheld all these things. But short was the sorrow which her old and feeble mind, not able to endure the same, wandering out of her right course, made her mad, as her barking complaints amidst the fields and woods did plainly show. But I, with a more firm and perfect memory than is needful for such woes, to my great grief do continually remain in my sorrowful and sound wits, and do discern more and more the preposterous occasions of my present woes, and of my future sorrows. Because my manifold harms, enduring longer than hers, I think them (be they never so light) to be more grievous (as I have many times said) than the greatest and most sensible pains which is ended in a short time.

Sophonisba (equally participating the adversities in her Widowhood, and the joy of her marriage in one and selfsame moment almost of time),
Sophonisba jocund and sad, an honourable and glad spouse, and a poor prisoner, invested and despoiled of a Kingdom, and finally in these short alterations of tottering Fortune drinking her fatal poison (full of anguish and deadly grief), appeareth next unto my thoughts. Behold her sometimes a most high and famous Queen of the Numidians, afterwards the martial affairs of her Parents and friends having but an adverse and luckless issue, her Husband Siphax taken from her, and become prisoner to

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Masinissa King of Marsilia (warring under the Roman Ensigns) and herself in one hour deprived of her Kingdom, and prisoned also in the midst of her enemy's Camp, Masinissa afterwards making her his wife, and she restored to the same again.

Oh, with what despite, grief and bitter anguish of mind do I believe that she saw these things succeed abruptly one after another. Nor yet secure of her voluble and flattering Fortune, with how heavy a heart did she celebrate her new espousals, which griefs and extreme miseries, with a tragical end at last, and with a stout enterprise, she did fully finish. Because not one natural day after the nuptial rites being yet spent, and scarcely thinking with herself that she remained in the regiment and that she did bear the former sway of Sceptre, and warring thus within herself, and thinking of the new love of Masinissa, not framed well to her mind—the old love of Siphax being not yet extinct—with no trembling heart, but with a bold hand, received the mortiferous poison, which her new Husband sent her by her own Servant (the fearful messenger of her untimely death), and with certain spiteful and premised speeches, without any sign and token of fear in her resolute face, drunk of the same, immediately after yielding up her ghost.

Oh, how bitter may one imagine that her life was if she had had any longer time to meditate and think of her death that did follow. Who therefore

THE SEVENTH BOOK

is not to be placed but amongst those Women who have been but meanly and not much afflicted with sorrow, considering that her speedy death *To think of grief maketh it greater* did prevent her beginning woes, whereas mine have continued with me a long time together, and yet do accompany me against my will, and are sworn to remain still with me to make themselves more mighty thereby, and with their united forces to infest more their usurped habitation. After her, doleful Cornelia, oppressed with infinite sorrow, was objected to my musing thoughts, whom smiling Fortune had exalted so high to make her the first wife of Crassus, and afterwards great Pompey his spouse, whose worthy valour had almost gotten him the chiefest principality in Rome, and attained to the sole government of all the Empire annexed unto it. Who, notwithstanding after that frowning Fortune changed her copy, in manner of a fugitive fled miserably out of Rome, and afterwards out of all Italy, herself also with her husband being fiercely pursued of conquering Cæsar. And leaving her in Lesbos, after many turmoils of inconstant fortune, overcoming his puissant competitor in Thessaly, by whose discomfiture and overthrow he recovered his force and might again, which not long since by his valiant enemy was greatly abated. And besides all this, with hope to reintegrate, and to renew his power in the conquered East, floating upon the

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

surging Seas, and arrived in the kingdoms of Egypt, offering himself voluntarily to the defence and trusty tuition of young King Ptolemy : being there cruelly done to death, she saw his embrued and headless trunk tossed and beaten up and down the raging waves. Which things if every one by itself, or altogether, be duly considered, we must needs say that without all compare they afflicted most grievously her dying soul.

But the sound and comfortable counsel of the sage Utica Cato, and the lost hope in these instabilities of Fortune to regain her Pompey again, in a little time mitigated, nay, rather annihilated her former sorrows, whereas I, still nourished with vain hope, not able by any counsel or comfort to drive away the same, but by the simple advice of my old Nurse (equally knowing of my sorrows from the beginning, in whose heart I knew goodwill more rife than wisdom ripe in her head, because believing oftentimes to remedy my griefs she hath redoubled them), do evermore remain and live consuming myself in bitter complaints and confounded in a thousand doubts and anxieties of mind. There are also many who (I think) do believe that Cleopatra, Queen
Cleopatra of Egypt, did suffer intolerable grief, and that her pains did greatly exceed mine. Because first, seeing herself conjoined with her brother in the Kingdom, and living in all manner of pleasure and delights, and afterwards cast by him

THE SEVENTH BOOK

into prison, was thought beyond all measure to be charged with insupportable dolour.

But the present hope of that which after happened made her to pass it over more lightly. For she, being delivered out of prison, became Cæsar his loving and beloved Lady. But afterwards forsaken of him, there are who think that for grief of these crossing cares her tender heartstrings did wellnigh break asunder, not regarding that there was a certain touch of unconstancy and breach of love, as well in her as in him, which at both their pleasures they did forsake, and take from one another, and bestow it elsewhere, as oftentimes she plainly showed how fitly she could do the same. But the Gods forbid that such consolation befall to my comfortless and afflicted soul. For he was never yet, or ever shall be, besides him to whom by many deserts I have avowed the whole term and travail of my life, that could affirm, or yet can say, that I was ever his, but in heart affianced only to Panphilus, and whose I will for ever remain.

Nor let him hope, whosoever he be, that any other love shall never be of such force as to drive his out of my faithful breast. Besides this, if she had been at Cæsar his departure left altogether comfortless by him, there would be some again who, ignorant of the truth, would believe that this was very grievous unto her: but yet it was not so. Because if she were on the one side aggrieved at his departure, the joy on the other, and the comfort, that she

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

received of her little Son Cæsarionem which she had by him, and of her kingdom restored to her again, countervailing her grief, nay, exceeding all her former sorrows whatsoever, did yield her treble consolation. This joy hath force and strength enough to overcome greater anguish and more extreme cares of mind than those of them who love but a little, and that but coldly too, as even now I said that she did. But that which for the accomplishment of her greatest grief was annexed to the rest was that she was the wife of Mark Antony, whom she had, with her libidinous enticements, stirred up to civil, nay uncivil, wars against her own brother, aspiring thereby and hoping (by the victory of them) to have been crowned Empress of the Roman monarchy. But double loss arising to her by this in one hour, which was the death of her slain husband and of her frustrate hope, of all other women made her (as it is commonly thought) the most unfortunate and most sorrowful Lady, and beyond all conceit to be confounded with the greatest cares and griefs that might be. And considering truly so high a mind and so proud a conceit, which to be, first in imagination and afterwards indeed, sole and sovereign Lady and Queen of the whole circuit of the earth, by one unfortunate battle to be dashed and cast down (our sex also being naturally given to aspire and domination), besides the foil of the conquered, and the triumph of the victor, and

THE SEVENTH BOOK

besides this the loss also of so dear and brave a husband, it cannot be otherwise apprehended but that it was a wonderful corsive to her noble heart and an extreme torment of her dismayed soul.

But suddenly she found out a wholesome medicine, which did speedily help and heal this mortal malady, and that was a strange kind of death. Which, although for the time it was very cruel and sharp, was not for all that in execution any long time adoining; because in one little hour two venomous vipers may at the paps of a young and tender woman suck out both blood and life, as they did out of miserable Cleopatra's breast.

Oh, how many times would I have done the like, although for a lesser occasion according to the opinion of many, if I had been peremptorily forsaken, or if for fear also of ensuing infamy thereof I had not withdrawn myself.

With this and the aforesaid Ladies the excellency of Cyrus, killed of Tomyris and drowned in a bowl of his own blood, the fire and water of *Cyrus,* Cræsus, the rich kingdoms of the Persians, *Cræsus,* the magnificency of Pyrrhus, the power of *Persians,* Darius, the cruelty of Jugurtha, the *Pyrrhus,* tyranny of Dionysius, the highness of Agamemnon, and the sudden changes of many *Darius,* other more occurred to my thoughts. All *Jugurtha,* which were stinged with these griefs, and spurned at *Dionysius,* the feet of scornful Fortune, as the foresaid women, *Agamemnon*

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

or else, altogether comfortless, left to worse mis-
haps. Who also with sudden arguments of their
better fare were aided, nor remaining any long time
in them, did not feel the greatness and grief of them

*Company,
as it is
abovesaid,
doth lessen
the grief.
Theistes,
Tereus*

so entirely as I do. Whilst I went recount-
ing the ancient sorrows in this sort, as you
have heard, and seeking in my mind to
find out some tears and sorrows in most
respects like unto mine own, because, hav-
ing company, I might not so greatly lament,

and might suffer my grief with more patience, those
of Theistes and of Tereus, both which were the miser-
able Sepultures of their own Sons, were objected
to my memory. And I marvel what unnatural and
forced patience (fearing their inward bitings) and
what pitiless restraint did moderate those savage
Sires from launching their sides, and with slicing
knives to make way for their Sons struggling in
their paternal bowels, and striving to come forth,
abominating that wretched place into which they
were so ravenously gulfed. But these also burst
out, and (with that they could) choked at once their
hatred and grief together, and so took in a manner a
certain comfort in their harms, perceiving that with-
out fault they were accounted miserable men but of
their people—that which happened not to me.

For I have compassion borne me of that which
did never grieve me, and dare not discover that
which doth most of all afflict me, which thing if I

THE SEVENTH BOOK

durst do, I doubt not ; but as others in my miserable case have found out some remedy for their pains, so might I (perhaps) find out some ease and help as well as they. The pitiful tears of Lycurgus, and of his house (justly poured forth for dead Archemorus killed of the Serpent), come also sometimes to my mind, and accompanied with the continual sighs of sorrowful Atalanta, mother of Parthenopæus, killed in the Theban Camps, which came so properly and so nearly to me with their effects that I could scarce conceive any greater than them in my mind, if I had not proved them myself, I say, that they were full of such great sorrow that they could not be more.

But every one of them are with so high glory eternished that they might be esteemed in a manner merry accidents than mournful stratagems—the sorrowful tears (of Lycurgus, I mean), with the mortal exequies, honoured of the seven kings, and infinite sports and spectacles made by them in solemnization of that glorious funeral, and those of Atalanta made notable and beautified also with the laudable life and victorious death of her young Son.

But I have not anything, nor any such cause, to make my tears scarce well employed, much less excellent, and myself content ; because if it were so, whereas I now esteem myself more doleful and unfortunate than any other, perhaps I should be persuaded to aver the contrary. The long travels of

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

Ulysses, his mortal and imminent perils, his wandering and weary peregrinations, and all his deeds

Ulysses whatsoever, are next of all showed unto me,

who never tasted them but seasoned with most bitter and extreme anguish of mind, and redoubled many times in my imaginations, they make me think mine to be far greater and much more grievous, and harken why. Because first, and principally, he was a man, and therefore of nature more strong and better able to endure them than I, being a tender and young woman; and he, being moreover continually armed with a stout, courageous and fierce mind, and beaten to daily dangers as one ripened amongst them when he travailed and turmoiled, did seem to have but his ordinary repose, nay, his greatest ease and pleasure in them.

But I being continually in my Chamber, and tenderly served with dainty and delicate things, passing my times away in pleasures, and daily accustomed to dalliances of wanton love, every little pain and fear thereof is most grievous unto me.

He driven and pricked on by Neptune, and transported into divers parts of the world, and of Æolus likewise received his troubles.

But with careful love I am infected, and with such a lord infested, that troubled and conquered them, that molested and tossed Ulysses. And if dangerous casualties and daily fears did seem to threaten him, of his proper accord he wandered

THE SEVENTH BOOK

continually in seeking of them out. And who can with just cause complain or be aggrieved for finding of that which he doth so earnestly seek *None can be sorrowful for finding that they seek* for? But I (silly wretch) would fain live in quiet if I could, and would willingly fly from woes and griefs, if that so rigorously they did not rush upon me, and if I were not myself so forcibly driven upon them.

Besides this, he was not afraid of death, and therefore without fear did commit himself to her force and might. But I live in continual dread of it, though, compelled by extreme sorrow, I have sometime (not without fear of greater grief) run willingly unto it. He also by his long travels and jeopardies of Fortune did hope to get eternal glory and never-dying fame. But I am afraid of my escandalized name, and infamous memory hereafter, if it should come to pass that these secret loves should at any time come to light.

So that now his pains are not greater and more than mine, but are rather in number and quality far less than mine, and by so much the more as they are fabulated to be greater than ever they were indeed. But mine (alas) are, too true, so many and more greater than I am able myself to recount. But after all these, I see (methinks) the sorrows, sobs and heavy sighs, the infinite woes and piteous complaints, that Hipsiphile, Medea and Cœnone had, and the pitiful tears of Ariadne, which were more

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

copious than all the rest : all which I judge most like unto mine. Because every one of these (like myself), deceived of their lovers, watered the ground with tears, cleaved the heavens with continual sighs, and sustained without any fruit, or hope of future content, most bitter torments of mind. And admit (as it is granted) that these dolours were cast upon them by their ungrateful lovers, and by their injurious and undeserved ingratitude, yet with just revenge of their wrongs done unto them they saw the end of their tears : which comforts (although I wish it not) my sorrows also have not. Hipsiphile, admit that she had greatly honoured Jason, *Hipsiphile* and had by due deserts obliged him unto her, perceiving him to be taken away of Medea, had with as great reason as myself just occasion of complaint and sorrow.

But such was the providence of the Gods that, with righteous eyes beholding everything (but only my harms), they restored to her a great portion of her desired toy, because she saw Medea, who had taken away Jason from her (Jason forsaking Medea for the love of Creusa), quite dispossessed of her once enjoyed prey. Certes, I do not say that my grief should finish if I should see the same befall to her who hath deceived me of my Panphilus, unless I were that she that should allure him from her again, but will frankly confess that a great part of my sorrow would for a time cease.

THE SEVENTH BOOK

Medea did also rejoice for revenge that she had (although she was no less cruel towards herself than

Medea malicious against her ungrateful lover) in killing their common children in his own presence, and consuming the royal palaces of King Creon and the new Lady with merciless

Ænone flames. Ænone, also sorrowing a long time, in fine knew that her disloyal lover suffered due punishment for breaking and corrupting the sacred laws of love, and saw his country, for the wicked rape and exchange of herself for his new adulteress, miserably wasted, and his own City, sometimes the seat of demi-Gods and semi-Goddesses, but now an uncouth habitacle and a poor village of Shepherd swains, overthrown and razed clean from the ground. But truly I love my griefs a great deal more than I would either with tongue or heart wish so sharp a revenge of my wrongful Panphilus.

Ariadne Ariadne also, being Bacchus his wife, saw from heaven furious Phedra, who was the cause that Theseus, abandoning her, and leaving her desolate in the Island (being newly enamoured of Phedra) miserably bewitched with the incestuous love of Hippolitus her husband his son. So that, everything duly scanned, I find myself amongst the number of miserable and disastrous women to be tormented with more woes, griefs and with greater sorrow than any of the rest, and to have the sole principality and only name of all other distressed women whatsoever.

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

And I can do no more. But if, perhaps (good Ladies), you accompt my framed arguments but frivolous assertions, and repute all these former examples but weak proofs, as forged in the simple conceit of an appassioned woman; and if you imagine them (because proceeding from a blind mind) to be but blind also, and of no conclusion, esteeming the tears, sighs and sorrows of others more extreme than mine, and thinking them to be more unfortunate than myself, let this only and last proposition therefore supply the defect (if any there be) of all the rest before. If he that beareth envy is more miserable and more wretched than he to whom he doth bear it, then of all the forenamed persons I am the most miserable and unhappy woman. Because I do greatly emulate and not a little envy their ordinary accidents, accounting them not so grievous nor so full of such great misery as mine are.

Behold, therefore (gentle Ladies), how by the old deceits of injurious Fortune I breathe a most wretched woman. And besides this, she hath done by me no otherwise than a candle burned to the snuff do cast up flashes of greater light, since that (in appearance only), making truce with my griefs and giving some pause to my daily woes and a little ease to my tormented mind, but by her cruel despite again returning afterwards to my former tears and to my sorrowful task, of all the wretched women

THE SEVENTH BOOK

that live, she hath made me the most miserable, and the only receptacle of all despair and dole. And because, all other comparisons laid aside, with only one I may endeavour to make you more assured of my new evils, I affirm (gentle Ladies) and tell you with that gravity, that other miserable women my compeers may affirm greater, that my pains are at this present so much the more greater than they were before their vain and frustrate joy, by how much the second fevers assailing the sick patients with equal cold and heat are wont to annoy them (recovered once and now fallen down again) more than the first. And because I may rather heap pity in your minds with the imagination of the rest of my pains than fill your dainty ears full of new words tendering your wearied spirits with pity that I have of your patience, minding now not to be more tedious unto you, and not to draw forth your tears any further in length—if there be any of you at the least that in reading of it have (perhaps) shed or yet do pour forth any—and not to spend the time any longer in words, which calleth me back to tears, I am determined to hold my peace, making it manifest unto you that there is no more comparison of my shadowed discourse to those substantial dolours, which I feel indeed, than there is of painted fire, to that which doth burn indeed: the which I pray all the Gods that, either by your meritorious prayers or else

AMOROUS FIAMMETTA

by my earnest and effectual orisons, they would with some liquor of comfort extinguish, or with speedy death quite abolish ; or else with the joyful return of my Panphilus assuage and moderate the same.

FIAMMETTA SPEAKETH TO HER BOOK



ND thou, my little Book, drawn out (as it were) from the sepulture of thy Lady, art now (as it hath pleased me) come to an end, with a most careful, troublesome and tired foot, even such as thou art now, written by mine own hands, and with my falling tears in most places defaced, before the enamoured Ladies and wanton Gentlewomen, present and offer thyself. And if (pity being thy guide, as I do most assuredly hope it will be) they shall willingly look on thee ; and if Love hath not changed his Laws since I became a miserable Lover, let it be no shame for thee in so vile a habit (as I send thee) to go to every Lady, and Gentlewoman, of what honour and degree soever she be, so that they deign to give thee friendly entertainment. Thou needest not any other habit, since I thought this most fitting thy effects : considering that thou must be content to figure my life, myself and my times (which being most unfortunate) make thee apparelled with misery as me appalled with mishap. Wherefore take thou no care for that which other books (whose subjects are contrary to thine) are wont to have, which are, sumptuous coverings garnished with curious and

FIAMMETTA SPEAKETH

costly works, depainted and beautified with sundry fair colours, polished with fine shavings, laid on with embroidered knots of Gold and silver, or else bearing high styles and glorious titles. These (I say) are not beseeeming the sad and heavy complaints which thou dost carry in thy forehead. Leave these aside (my woeful Book), and the great margins also, and ruled spaces, the brave kinds of coloured inks, and the great characters, placed in the beginning of happy Books, which only sing of mirth, glory, joy and bliss. It doth become thee best, with torn and ruffled leaves, and tached full of blots and blurs, to go thither; and to those to whom I send thee, with ringing my distressed mishaps into the ears of them that shall read thee, to awake and stir up their hearts to holy pity and due compassion of them. Of which piety, if (by thy suggestions) they express and show forth any outward signs in their fair and beautiful visages, then be not thou slack to render them (as well as thou canst) immediate and immortal thanks for their pitiful duties towards thee. Why, thou and I are not reduced to such a miserable condition, nor are not so heavily disgraced of cruel Fortune, that these requitals should seem so great but that we may, and can, well afford them. Nor can she take this privilege from any wretched Woman—that is, to set herself forth as a president of mishap, and to give approved examples of misery to those which live in happiness, because they may,

TO HER BOOK

in their golden felicities and in their prosperities, use a moderate mean, and so temperate their pleasures that they fall not into that confused labyrinth of love and into that miserable estate of life, as I have done. Which kind of life, both led and loathed of me, so plainly (as I know thou canst well do) and so particularly lay open before them that (if in their wily loves they are but anything wary and but meanly wise), by fear of our sustained harms, they may be well advised, and forewarned in obviating the secret and subtle deceits of young Men. Go, therefore. But whether a hasty or slow pace is fittest for thee I know not, nor what piece of thee shall be first sought out, nor how nor of whom thou shalt be received. But as Fortune doth guide thee, so go thou on. Thy course cannot be much inordinate. Thy cloudy times do hide thy shining star, which, if it did yet appear, furious Fortune hath so eclipsed that she hath left no hope of thy better hap, nor argument of thy health. And therefore thrown abroad here and there (as a Ship without helm and sails tossed up and down the surging waves), carelessly abandon thyself, and as the places require, use likewise divers and congruent counsels. And if perhaps thou dost come to the hands of some one woman who doth with so great content and happiness enjoy her loves, as we are most unfortunately molested with ours, that will laugh and flout at mine, and

FIAMMETTA SPEAKETH

reprehend them (perhaps) and condemn them for foolish and yeld toys, with an humble and patient mind bear thou nevertheless their scorns, and digest their taunts which are but the least part of our great griefs, and which seem nothing at all to those that we have already passed. And put her in mind that Fortune is evermore unconstant and wavering; by which Caveat she may know that by the ordinary course of her mutability she may make us glad again, and may bring her to that kind of painful life as she hath now driven us unto, and that then, with like mocks and flouts, we will requite and pay hers home again. But if thou shalt find anyone that in reading of thee cannot keep the tears from her eyes, but that (condolent and pitiful of our cares and pains) doth with the same multiply thy blots, receive and gather them, as most precious and holy drops in thy bosom, and mingle them with mine; and then showing thyself more pitiful and afflicted, request her humbly that she would pray for me to him who doth with golden feathers in a moment visit all the world, so that, entreated by a more religious mouth, and by more meritorious prayers than mine, and therefore more pliable to the petitions of others than to my complaints, he may lighten my heavy sorrows, and take away my oppressing anguish of mind. And whosoever she be, even with the form of words which to miserable wretches is granted most exaudible, I pray, and

TO HER BOOK

do with those prayers most heartily obtest, which are in the ears of the hearers of them most effectual, that she may never taste of such bitter miseries, and that the placable Gods may be ever favourable unto her, and that she may happily and perpetually enjoy her love according to her own desires. But if among the amorous company of wanton young Gentlewomen posting thee from one hand to another thou dost (by chance) come to the fingering of mine enemy, and to the wrongful usurpess of my felicity, fly incontinently from thence as from an infectious and naughty place, and discover not one of thy leaves, lines or letters to her robbing and bewitching eyes, lest that, understanding the second time of our woes and pains, she might have more occasion to boast and brag again that she hath wounded and confounded me. But yet if it chance that by force she keep thee, and (maugre thy teeth) will see and read thee, then offer thyself in such sort to her that she may not laugh, but lament in reading of my hard mishaps, and, pricked with the sting of her guilty conscience, she may be in mind persuaded to restore to me again my unjustly detained Lover. Oh, what happy pity and holy piety should this be, and then how would the sour fruit of this harsh pain seem sweet to my distempered taste. Shun the eyes of men, of whom, if thou canst not choose but be seen, speak unto them, saying: "O ungrateful generation,

FIAMMETTA SPEAKETH

deriders and deceivers of simple women, it is not meet for you (considering your demerits) to look into holy things, and fraught full of such pity as this is, and (knowing your remorse of pity to be so small, as your impiety and cruelty is great) unfit to meddle with distressed and pitiful things." But if to him who is the origin of all our harms thou dost chance to come, with this exclamation afar off greet him from me, saying :

"O thou which art more rigorous and harder than any Oak, fly from hence, and do not violate me with thy unworthy and polluted hands. Thy corrupted faith is an occasion of all this which I bring with me. But yet if with a courteous, gentle and indifferent mind thou wilt read me, recognizing thy former faults and present injuries unjustly done against her whose messenger of sorrow I am, and that returning to her again thou desiredst to be pardoned of her, then boldly see, touch and spare not to read me. But if thou wilt not perform this last requisite duty, it is not then so decent and honest a thing for thee to see the pitiful tears which thou hast unpitifully caused ; and then would it be again but small for thy credit to increase them more and more if (in reading me) thou dost (as I think thou canst not) persist in thy first and froward will."

And if perhaps any curious and dainty Gentlewoman doth dislike of thy words so rudely com-

TO HER BOOK

posed and so disorderly couched together, tell her that that which is unpolished and unpleasant for her fine conceit she may (if she please) overslip and let pass, because brave and filed speeches require clear minds and free from all hurtful passions, and are best beseeeming merry and calm times. And therefore thou shalt say unto her, that she may a great deal sooner fall in admiration, how my troubled wit, my tired pen, and pains did last out but for that little which thou dost tell out of order, considering that fervent love on the one side, and burning jealousy on the other, with divers conflicts, held my sorrowful soul in continual battles, thy obscure and cloudy times feeding the one, and contrary Fortune favouring the other. Thou mayest go safely away (as I believe) and securely escape from all awaits laid to entrap thee, and needest not care for the cavils of captious heads, because thou mayest be assured that Envy, with her venomous teeth or infectious tongue, shall neither bite nor sting thee.

But if perchance thou shalt find any (which I think thou never canst) that, being more miserable than thyself, might emulate thee (as one more happy and not so wretched as herself), then patiently suffer thyself to be bitten. But I do not well know what part of thee shall receive any new offence, since that with the cruel blows of angry Fortune I see thee torn and broken in every place. Thou canst not be injured now any more by her than already thou art, nor

FIAMMETTA SPEAKETH

from any high and happy seat is she able to make thee fall down to a more vile and base place, for so low as none may be lower is that where now thou dost remain. And admit that she hath not thought it meet to conjoin us with the superficial part of the earth, and doth still seek and suppeditate stranger occasions to inter us under it, we are so beaten, and so inured to adversities, that with those shoulders with which we have sustained and do yet bear the greatest and most heavy burdens of woes and sorrow, we shall with less pain and not with so great grief bear lighter and endure lesser than those. And therefore let her assail us when and where she will. Live, therefore. For nothing may deprive thee of this. And remain an eternal example and perpetual president of bitter anguish and grief of thy woeful Mistress to those who live in happy mirth and heavy misery.

Bueno fin haze, el qual bien amando muera

